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Connecting in spirit:
Relationships in international development

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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by
Walter Lewthwaite

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Abstract of a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
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by

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Organisations involved in planning and delivering international development projects, and their recipient partners, can hold worldviews that conflict with each other's. How the parties negotiate tensions, explicit or implicit, between these worldviews could be important for project success. I investigated how these interactions are managed using a typology of three parties in a triangular relationship: recipients, faith-based organisations (FBOs), and secular organisations. Over these I ran the theoretical lens of Habermasian post-secularity, which advocates for a substantive role for religion in public life. The research concluded that FBOs and the recipient, less-developed world, which is generally profoundly religious, can, through religion, and regardless of what that religion is, have a natural rapport. This recipient-FBO bond is likely to be the strongest and most open bond in that triangle of relationships. On another leg of the triangle, Western-based FBOs, while wrestling with their own identity and role, could be considered to have the tools to connect satisfactorily with their compatriot secular colleagues. By way of contrast secular organisations will face an additional and often high barrier of an absence of religious faith when trying to achieve trusting relationships with recipient groups. This research found that, within Habermas's original focus area, that is within Western secular nations, there are distinct limits to the practice of post-secularity, and these limits are more stark when considering the triangle of relationships in international development. An extension to Habermas's views is that the research showed value in not just listening but also engaging and debating views as a pathway to achieving true partnership. The research also shows that New Zealand practice in integrating religion and development is lagging behind best international practice. The thesis identifies applications for improved relationships in managing aid and development, including suggesting a role for FBOs as facilitators in communicating across worldviews. Aspects of communication theory, particularly regarding assonance and dissonance, provide a helpful perspective, as does a model of worldviews that uses the concept of an 'excluded middle' to contrast spiritual worldviews with secularity. Agency theory offers another relevant worldview base for understanding relationships, with Western organisations, both secular and faith-based, having a similar perspective that is different from the views of many in the less-developed world. The thorny issue of proselytising was found to be misunderstood, with political and secular attempts to change worldviews being more common, more radical and often more coercive than religious proselytising. The thesis notes the need for further research on the effects on development outcomes of both religious faith and better relationships; on global trends in religiosity; and on factors that inhibit adoption of a spirit of post-secularity.

Keywords: international development, partner relationships, worldviews, religion, post-secular, faith-based organisations

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandchildren – currently Angelina, Nathaniel, Benjamin, Jonathan and Noah – with the hope and prayer that they will live in an even better world than mine, and will enjoy contributing to its further development.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| BAB | Baptist Aid Bangladesh |
| BANZAid | the aid and development department of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society |
| CID | Council for International Development, New Zealand |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CNG | Compressed natural gas, the name of a three-wheeled Bangladeshi taxi |
| DFID | Department for International Development, United Kingdom |
| EWB | Engineers Without Borders |
| FBO | faith-based organisation |
| GIWA | Global Interfaith WASH Alliance |
| GJM | Global Justice Movement |
| HRC | Human Rights Commission, New Zealand |
| IAP2 | International Association for Public Participation |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| KOHA, or KOHA-PICD | Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao – Partnerships for International Community Development: the New Zealand government’s international aid and development fund at the start of the Chandpur TCDC |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| MFAT | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand |
| NGHA | non-governmental humanitarian agency |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| NZ | New Zealand |
| NZADDS | NZ Aid and Development Dialogues |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| OIC | Organization of Islamic Conference |
| PAR | participatory action research |
| RaD | Religions and Development, a research programme funded by DFID |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TCDC | Total community development centres project, or Chandpur TCDC |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNIATF | United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USA | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WASH | Water, sanitation and hygiene |
| WFDD | World Faiths Development Dialogue |
| VSA | Volunteer Service Abroad, a New Zealand aid and development organisation |
| WID | women in development |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Some years ago, in a developing Asian country, I ran a training course for senior managers from a government department. A painful discussion at the end of the course led to the admission from participants that the training would make no difference to their activities as their superiors were not at the course. Later, my probings into the factors that led to their unwillingness to take initiatives suggested there were multiple layers, formed over a millennium, in the way they saw the world, that inhibited their freedom to change. The relevance of this sort of deep cultural characteristic had not been addressed in either academic courses on development that I had done or with any seriousness in development planning that I was aware of.

In another Asian country, in the final stages of shaping a rural development programme, the donor invited me to join the planning team and provide a fresh perspective, and write the final proposal report. While participating in village consultations I heard a word that sounded like 'ghosts' and, when I asked, my interpreter confirmed they were talking about the spirits of their ancestors. The villagers' discussion was long and intense but they gave me no feedback. Later, I quizzed my interpreter who said they preferred not to discuss these issues with outsiders, and had never talked with Westerners about them, as 'you don't believe in ghosts'. I outlined briefly my own worldviews which included the existence of a spirit world, although I acknowledged the details of my views would be different from those of my interpreter and his people. That point of connection gave him enough confidence to explain at length their belief in the presence of spirits of their ancestors, and the way those spirits would affect the goals and execution of the programme, and he advised on how to manage the spirits to save the project from disruption. A further detail concerned the reason for keeping silent: my interpreter advised they were concerned that, if they stated their beliefs openly, they might expose themselves to ridicule and the donors might cancel their interest in the project. The recipients would rather conceal their views and obtain half what they wanted, than speak openly and risk receiving nothing.

I felt greatly privileged to hear those views. But I was also profoundly disturbed that the project had been under investigation for some years, and it was only at the final step that those beliefs, which were so important to the villagers, were expressed. I wondered how often that story might be repeated around the globe, but without the serendipitous ending that we had.

Those are two of many incidents that led to my research interest: What are the effects of people's worldviews on the outcomes of development projects? How important is it to achieve reasonable

alignment of worldviews between the partners? How can differing worldviews be best recognised and integrated into project planning? How much room is there to modify the worldviews of programme partners when designing and executing programmes?

Also, for a PhD research project, I wanted to identify some theories that describe connections between development parties, and to critique and develop those theoretical frames.

My hope was that this work would provide a better theoretical and practical understanding of relationships in international development, and that that understanding would provide a foundation for helping people to frame programmes that better satisfy the underlying hopes of all the parties.

To be practicable for a PhD project the research narrowed those questions to seeking to discover the extent to which differing worldviews affect relationships between partners when setting up and implementing international development projects. After defining one key term this chapter summarises the evolution of development theory, and notes briefly some theoretical frames that were considered for shaping the research.

1.1 Terminology

A key term in this thesis is *less developed countries*. Many terms are used to classify countries that have a lower level of economic or social development, what Solarz (2012, p. 1199) calls 'poor, undeveloped countries with an unsatisfactory quality of life' (p. 1563). For example Boas (2014), Dodds (2014), Solarz (2012) and Van Rooy (2014) list the terms: *third world*, *majority world*, *underdeveloped countries*, *developing countries*, *the global South* (or, to other writers, *southern actors*), *rising powers* and *emerging markets*. The UN (2019) has a list of *least developed countries*. Some of these terms imply all poorer countries are developing, and avoid the need to face a widening gap between rich and poor: I wanted to avoid terms that make that implication. Some of my interviewees considered the term *third world* was dated, referring back to obsolete political alignments. *South* is a term that is nonsensical to a writer from the southern hemisphere. The UN's *least developed countries* has a specific meaning that is too limiting for the purpose of this thesis. Other terms imply an economic focus. Generally I use the term *less developed countries* as being self-explanatory, not implying movement in development status, and avoiding an economic emphasis in the understanding of development. A more rounded understanding of the meaning of *less developed* will emerge through the thesis.

1.2 Evolution of development theory

Adams (2001) says development is 'an ambiguous and elusive concept' (p. 6) and, as expanded below, there has been a history of changes in understandings of what the term means. A simple definition from one development agency, New Zealand's Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA, n.d.), is a

helpful introduction¹: development is ‘a means of empowering present and future generations of people who have the least resources and power to decide their own destiny’ (p11). Earlier writers proposed economic development as the goal, while more recent writers recognise the need for a holistic approach. The thesis will present varying understandings of what *holism* means, but VSA’s theme of the ability or freedom to choose has support from many modern writers and practitioners. Also important to this research is an appreciation that change and the freedom to change are integral to development².

Many writers³ give a helpful summary of the evolution of theories regarding development. Details vary and there are some contradictions between writers, and in their turn the named authors quote a range of other sources. To provide a historical context for my current research I have compiled the following interpretation, and aspects of this are critiqued later in the thesis. Figure 1 provides a simple stylised outline to illustrate the progression of thought over the last 50 to 60 years. Each decade is depicted as showing a dominant theme and a style of working that could be considered to typify that decade.

It is outside the scope of this thesis to explore in detail the reasons for attempting development. I note briefly the following: Rawls’s (1971) concepts of social justice, for which he claims support from a number of prominent philosophers from the 18th century and earlier, imply a mandate for development⁴; Brookfield (1975) looks back at the rise of industrialisation and liberal economics in the 18th century (pp. 2f), leading to what he calls the ‘ethical’ (p. 12) period in the first part of the 20th century, when people started having a conscience about exploitation of colonised peoples; Myers (2011)⁵ and Craggs (2014)⁶ describe the rise of humanitarian movements in the West since the 18th century, as a consequence of the Enlightenment; and Binns (2014) sees development as part of a humanitarian ethic that dominated the West after World War 2.

¹ For reasons given in section 4.2, this thesis uses a lot of New Zealand data.

² Brookfield (1975, p. 208) went further, stating ‘Development is change’.

³ For example Adams (2001, pp. 6-9), and Desai and Potter (2014, pp. 1-3) have brief but helpful summaries of the changes in views over time; and Myers (2011), in chapters 3 and 5, provides a longer exposition of themes and theoreticians in development. See also Craggs (2014), Melkote (2002), Peet and Hartwick (1999), Potter ((2014(a)) and (2014(b))), Rakodi (2012a), and others referred to through the discussion here. Some authors put items in different decades. For example Potter (2014(a), p. 16f) places dependency theory in the 1960s, while Schuurman (2014) presents it as mainly a 1970s phenomenon: I have adopted the 1970s. Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 47) refer to the 1980s as the ‘structural adjustment decade’ whereas other writers allocate that expression more to the 1990s. I have adopted the 1990s. Gillespie (2001, p. 5) starts the sustainability movement in the 1960s. Part of the difference in dates is that recognition of an issue in development studies does not necessarily coincide with its recognition among practitioners, and writers do not always differentiate between those two forums; and first writings on a subject do not often coincide with the subject becoming a recognisable movement.

⁴ Rawls claims support from Kant, Plato, Augustine and Thomas, among others.

⁵ pp. 25-28

⁶ pp. 5-6

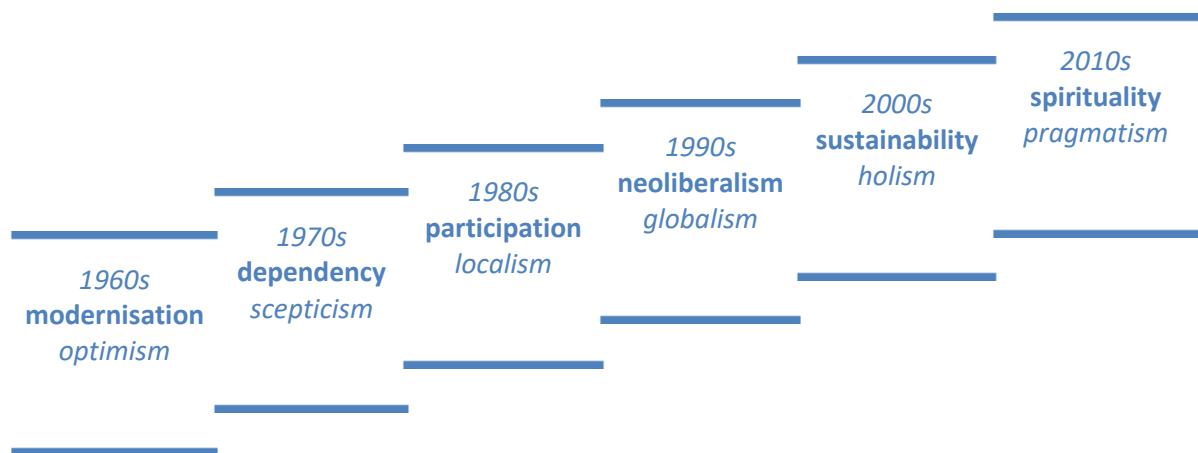


Figure 1: Evolution of development theory⁷

1960s

After the Second World War, and as a continuation of a colonial mind-set by Western nations ((Craggs, 2014), (Gonzalez, 2010)⁸), it was assumed the best way to help poor nations was to encourage them onto the path of economic industrialisation that the West had followed in earlier times. This Western view arose from the industrial revolution, which in itself was a product of the Enlightenment, and which, for the first time, gave people the belief that they could take some measure of control over the world and improve their lot, collectively, not just individually. So the expressions *development* and *under-development* were born. Development was built on the creativity and inventions of science and technology, and was perceived almost solely in economic terms⁹. The era was typified by large ‘heroic’ projects: major physical infrastructure such as hydro-electric dams and transport facilities, and manufacturing. Apart from building physical infrastructure, education was a prime tool for progress. The process was commonly called modernisation, and the West provided capital to invest in physical infrastructure, with the assumption that broad scale economic progress would happen. Rostow’s (1959) classic article, *The stages of economic growth*, was applied to form the Western approach: the role of aid was to put a country’s foot onto the bottom rungs of a ladder of industrial progress and allow it to ‘take off’, and we could expect the benefits to trickle down to those in most need¹⁰. Myers (2011)¹¹ documents the rise of many

⁷ Adapted from Dr Matthias Schellhorn, personal communication, 2017. Dr Schellhorn is an expert on tourism in development, and lectures part time at Lincoln University.

⁸ p. 457

⁹ For some history of the debate over an economic focus versus a more qualitative community change, see e.g. Black (1999, p. 216), Edwards (1989, p. 116), Gillespie (2001, pp. 1-14), Illich (2010, pp. 95-110), Marga Institute in Goulet (1992), Narman and Simon (1999, p. 216), Power (2014, pp. 95-99), and Sen ((1999, p. xii)). Some more recent institutional views are given by World Bank (2005, p. 8), UNDP (2016), and UNESCO (2017), describing poverty in both economic and broader well-being terms. This debate is expanded in section 2.2 and 2.3.

¹⁰ That is similar to the expression popularised by J. F. Kennedy: ‘A rising tide lifts all the boats’ (Brian, 2005).

¹¹ p. 28

development agencies during the 1960s: governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental. Bosch (1991) writes: 'theorists assumed that development was an inevitable, unilinear process that would operate naturally in every culture ... that the benefits ... would trickle down to the poorest of the poor ...' (p. 265).

The assumption that humanity can expect to exercise some control over its environment and improve its lot is core to the continuing development effort globally, and becomes a theme in this thesis. While emphases have changed substantially, the contribution of major physical infrastructure and industry to economic growth is still recognised as important to much development effort.

1970s

However, by the 1970s it was apparent that traditional approaches to aid and development were not fulfilling their expectations. This realisation was partly practical, in response to many poor outcomes of programmes, and partly philosophical, in relation to development's 'culturally and economically myopic' nature (Myers, 2011, p. 28). So a new science of development theory started, and the broad field of development studies was established. A common explanation for the lack of apparent progress became known as dependency theory, which postulated that wealthy nations, being at the core of decision making, acted in their own interests, even when dispensing aid, and side-lined those they were ostensibly helping. Marxist theory, structuralist and centre-periphery theory were popular explanations ((Conway & Heynen, 2014) and (Klak, 2014)). This debate fuelled and was fuelled by intense global competition between capitalist and Marxist economies. According to Deneulin and Rakodi (2011), part of these trends also led to 'more pro-active policies to ensure the benefits of economic growth would be spread widely' (p. 46). They considered the basic needs approach characterised the 1970s – 'a broad-based, people-oriented and endogenous process, as a critique of modernisation' (Elliott, 2014, p. 30). Despite these debates, or perhaps because of them, development was still almost entirely about economic growth. It was undoubtedly true that in some instances political motivations of donor governments overrode sound development practice. One iconic example was the Aswan high dam in Egypt, a potentially useful project that became the centre of a tug-of-war between the West, especially the USA, and Russia. Such grand scale technologies often ignored indigenous lands and ways of life. In addition, and in keeping with the times globally, it was complicated by inadequate investigation of environmental effects.

Today, dependency theory is still alive as a critique of neoliberal economic assumptions. For example it is used to describe what is called a new colonialism imposed by multinational corporations that have taken over the exploiting role of colonial governments of former centuries.

1980s

In the 1980s there was a counter-revolution in development theory, led by practitioners, with a central focus on local communities, and expressed in three conceptually linked movements. One was a trend away from grand projects toward localised tasks, a *third way*, which had been popularised through Schumacher's (1973) book, *Small is beautiful, A study of economics as if people mattered*. Grand projects gave way to simple local projects, including the adoption of what came to be called *appropriate technologies* that could be maintained by relatively untrained local communities. The *basic needs approach* was associated with this movement¹². Later in the decade an outcome of this localised emphasis was a second movement towards *people-centred* development, or *participatory* development. A key influence here was Chambers' book (1983) *Rural development: Putting the last first*¹³. This book promoted the idea that the recipients of aid, the local people, were the best experts in what was good for them. Melkote (2002, p. 428) acknowledges two different approaches to participation: 'participation-as-a-means' and 'participation-as-an-end', with the latter being more radical but gaining more support as time has passed. The 1980s also saw the start (Briggs, 2014) of a recognition of indigenous knowledge as a legitimate scientific study and reservoir of useful knowledge, alongside Western-led concepts. Chambers, in his book and subsequently (e.g. 1994b (p. 1254) and 1994a), went on to describe many tools that could be used in practice to 'hand over the stick' to local communities to draw plans themselves of what they wanted. Alongside this participatory development was a third movement, the rise in *civil society*, an empowering of the poor through legitimising their voice in decisions that affected them such as through small scale local political organisations. Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 48) considered the *livelihoods approach* – an approach that took into account the complex, diverse and dynamic ways that people gain a living (Scoones, 2009) – characterised the 1980s and 1990s. These movements increased the trend away from development as a purely economic concept.

Of these three themes, *small is beautiful* is now treated as one option amid others, to be selected as appropriate, rather than the dominant mode. *Participatory development* has been a mantra in the development industry since the 1980s and it figures prominently in this thesis. Its aims are still generally considered laudable, and the principle of local empowerment¹⁴ – or one of its current progressions as *localisation*¹⁵ – is still generally considered a key to successful development, and there are many success stories. Participatory development is talked of now among professionals as

¹² See, e.g. Binns (2014, pp. 104-105) and Elliott (2014, pp. 29-30)

¹³ See also Mohan (2014, pp. 131-136)

¹⁴ Boley, Maruyama and Woosnam (2015) describe empowerment as: 'where members of a community are active agents of change and they have the ability to find solutions to their problems, make decisions, implement actions and evaluate their solutions' (p. 112). This is in the context of 'struggles to overcome social injustices' (p. 113).

¹⁵ See, e.g. Clarke (2018), Metcalfe-Hough, Poole, Bailey & Belanger (2018) and Murray and Overton (2014, pp. 178-183)

basic to all their work, even if practice of the principle is a struggle (Lewthwaite, 1994, pp. 49-50). Additionally *civil society* is regarded as foundational to empowerment, although in many countries it also is a work in progress.

1990s

After the stock market crash of the late 1980s there was heart-searching in wealthy nations about whether they could continue to support development in the rest of the world. So firstly the crash led to a reversion to financial stringency and a focus on economic drivers. At the same time the collapse of communism saw a reduction in the West's political drivers to give aid. One response was a profound scepticism about the benefits of development, where theorists and major funders questioned the whole development enterprise. This was called *post-development* theory¹⁶. It did not gain many supporters in practice, but the post-communist era and the 1990s brought other responses. Firstly it was concluded that much development aid was wasted as poor countries lacked the political processes and legal and financial facilities to use it well. So structural adjustment programmes became part of an aid package, with closer accountability and monitoring as a condition of aid. Sachs (2005), with his book *The end of poverty: Economic possibilities for our time*, has been an apostle of this view. Secondly neoliberal economics was assumed to be proven as the way to progress¹⁷. In its turn this economic view had two further consequences: the West became more blatantly self-serving with wealthy nations seeing aid as an investment that would bring them an economic return; and organisations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank insisted, at a national level, on narrow capitalist economics with a minimum of regulation and a maximum of competition. Unfettered globalisation became a catch-cry. So while, by this time, many writers were arguing for a broader base than economics to our understanding of development, economic drivers dominated global practice. Further, few writers seemed able to maintain their broad approach to measures of development when attempting evaluations. The consequences have included a rapid growth in the wealth of most countries. But self-interest and the fact that the power is held by the wealthy means the world has not yet seen free trade. Neoliberalism has also come at the cost of a spectacular widening of the gap between rich and poor, both between nations, and between communities within nations. Collier (2007) in his book *The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*, has highlighted this outcome. In addition to the livelihoods approach that started in the 1980s, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011)¹⁸ considered post-development became a feature of the 1990s.

¹⁶ See, e.g. Sidaway (2014, pp. 147-152)

¹⁷ See, e.g. Conway (2014, pp. 106-111)

¹⁸ p. 46

Today strong forces are still pushing a neoliberal agenda, with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund continuing to be major players in the international development industry, and global capitalism and attempts at free trade driving relations between many nations and blocs. In many places corruption is still an issue where Western concepts of even-handedness, transparency and accountability have not taken root in the cultures and practices of recipient countries¹⁹.

2000s

In the 2000s two main movements arose. One was a greater embracing of the need for development to be sustainable. While this movement had been rising since the 1980s or earlier, it became part of mainstream development writings in the 2000s decade. In the popular press, sustainability has been aligned mainly with ecological limits, but in development literature it has included social, cultural and economic components. The other movement was a more philosophical cry for freedom. While the end of colonialism in the 1960s saw self-determination for nations, many communities and people groups within nations were not free. There was a need for what has been called the *conscientisation* of the poor, for the poor 'to come to feel like master of their thinking' and challenge inequalities (Freire, 1968, p. 118). Sen popularised the call for freedom in his 1999 book *Development as freedom*, in which he expounded the view that freedom is both the means and goal of development. His solutions were far from laissez faire, in that he advocated education programmes, sometimes thoroughly interventionist, so people had reason to choose a lifestyle they valued, and could build the capability to achieve that. By this time non-economic measures of development, such as education, gender equity, life expectancy, political representation, safety, and other ethical considerations, were taking hold more firmly. So, to many writers and practitioners but by no means all, economics was a means rather than an end.

Today, although the means of addressing it are not always clear, broad-based sustainability is a cross cutting theme that is embedded firmly into the programme planning and approval requirements of probably most development agencies. Examples of the drive for freedom are gender equality programmes and the continuing rise of civil society in many countries. However progress on the practice of freedom is often well short of what Western development leaders would like and, in practice, compromises are often made in the cause of achieving some progress towards a longer term goal. In much of the world, non-democratic practices restrain practical freedoms on women and dissent, so these agendas are still high-profile issues.

¹⁹ e.g. Uberti (2015)

2010s

Coming to the current decade, the 2010s, history will write its commentary on the dominant themes²⁰. The following three issues are interim suggestions.

- Post-secularity. This term was popularised by Habermas (2006). He looked at the Western world and argued that there continues to be a religious base to much of our society and its values, that religious belief is important to many in the West, and that we all need to live collaboratively with this rather than try to ignore religion and spirituality or confine them to private or individual spaces. Applying the term *post-secularity* to the development discourse, the last 20 years or so have seen some research asserting the prevalence of religion in developing countries, and its implications to development practice. Some writers argue the theme had been rising since the 1970s. The response has been uneven and faltering in both secular and religious literature and practice, with little dialogue between those two camps. However it became a major theme in my research, both through a review of theory and in the fieldwork and its analysis, and fuller discussions follow throughout the thesis.
- Human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948) was adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and has been re-signed more recently and endorsed by almost all nations. However in practice many signatories ignore its provisions or reinterpret them in partisan ways. Contraventions abound, for example in freedom of the Press; gender equality, its universality and its potential cultural redefinitions; legal and moral rights to economic development²¹; democracy, and culturally practical forms of democracy; and indigenous rights including recognising separate indigenous identities. Freedoms associated with human rights are gaining a higher profile and becoming highly politicised. This issue is important to this research but it entered it in an oblique way, underlying the discussion of power relationships that appear in people's worldviews.
- Inequality. Most writers on development agree that since the 1990s, the world has seen a widening gap between the rich and poor. While the wealth of most nations has increased, and often dramatically, the plight of many poor groups within nations has worsened in both relative and absolute terms. A practical concern is about reaching the unreachable, those in what Collier (2007) calls 'the bottom billion'. He and other writers²² consider a large number of people are trapped in poverty because of a range of factors that require both internal and external interventions to resolve. To a large extent these trapped groups are ignored by development agencies as they are proving too difficult to help. Looking to the future, most writers consider a

²⁰ See also Myers (2011, pp. 35-44)

²¹ See, e.g. D'Souza (2014, pp. 583-586)

²² See also Herod (2014), Murray and Overton (2014) and Schuurman (2014).

pure neoliberal agenda and its associated competition, globalisation and free trade will exacerbate the inequalities. However the topic of inequality was not core to this research and it arose infrequently.

This description of the evolution of development theory frames much of the rest of this thesis. It is presented as essential background rather than something to be examined in detail although, as indicated above²³, aspects of it will reappear frequently. Figure 2 shows the emergence and continuance of key themes from each decade since the 1960s. A solid arrow indicates the theme has continued strongly throughout the period indicated, and a dotted line indicates the theme has continued with less strength. The absence of a line – in the case of post development – indicates the theme failed to take root, and faded from significance beyond its initial decade.

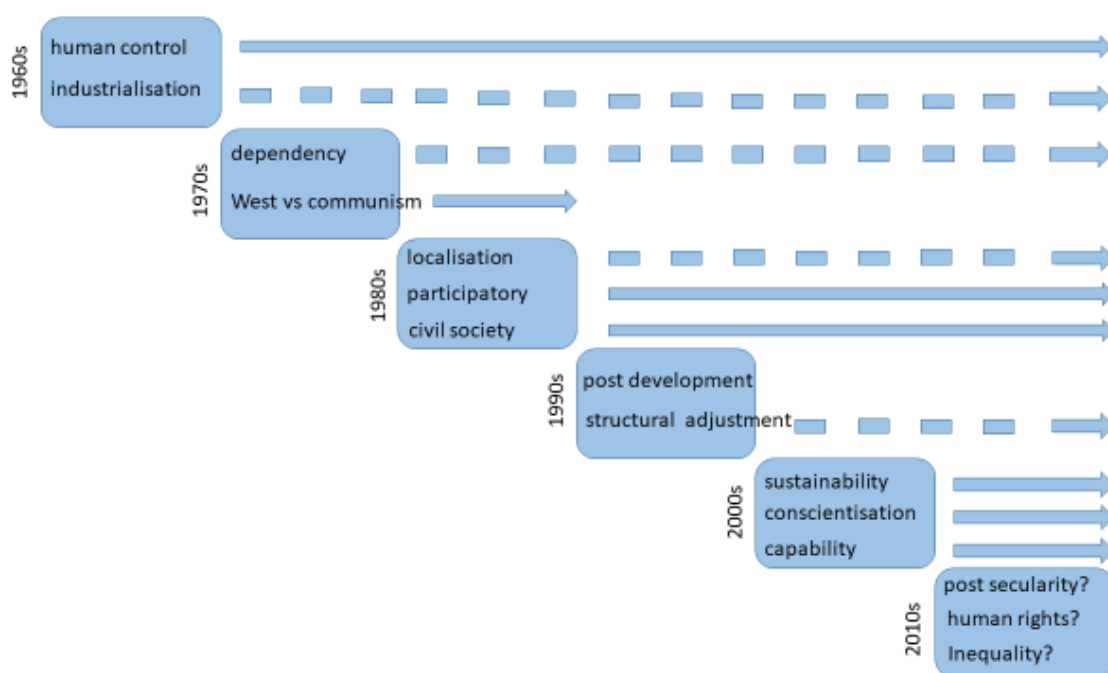


Figure 2 : Emergence and continuance of decadal themes

1.3 Potential theoretical frames

Preliminary reading suggested a plethora of theories that could be brought to bear on the research topic. These included social construction theory²⁴, grounded theory²⁵, a particular social control theory²⁶, social conflict theory²⁷, and basic values theory²⁸. Initial reflections suggested my interest in the effects of worldviews on relationships might fit best within social constructionism, but all the

²³ In the descriptions above, the final paragraph on each decade notes the themes that have continued and are relevant to this thesis.

²⁴ See e.g. Andrews (2012); Berger and Luckman (1966); and Scott and Marshall (2015)

²⁵ See e.g. Bowen (2006), Bryant & Charmaz (2007), Glaser & Strauss (1967), and Musgrave (2009, p. 41f)

²⁶ See e.g. Benedict (1946), Friedrichs (2016) and Georges (2014)

²⁷ See e.g. Kriesberg and Dayton (2012) and Pruitt (2007)

²⁸ See e.g. Schwartz, M (2005), and Schwartz, S ((2011) and (2012))

theories listed here had some relevance to my work, and I did not adopt a fixed theoretical frame. Literature research and fieldwork further refined the theoretical frames of interest, and these emerge in later chapters.

1.4 Roadmap to thesis

Chapter 2 of the thesis starts the review of theory and literature, considering worldviews of parties that contribute to international development, and identifying one concept as being particularly relevant to my interests. Chapter 3 rounds out the review of literature and theory, looking at the organisations or categories of people that participate in the development enterprise, introducing a discussion on communication, and identifying gaps in the literature.

Chapter 4 is about methods.

Fieldwork results are described in chapters 5 to 7. As essential background to the thesis question, Chapter 5 describes the worldviews of the parties I identified. Chapter 6 brings together material that addresses the main question of the thesis: the connections that different categories of people or organisations felt with each other, and demonstrates the effects that their worldviews had on those relationships. Chapter 7 records discussions on the politically charged topic of changing worldviews. These chapters provide little evaluation or critique of fieldwork results.

Chapter 8 is the discussion chapter, and is where the bulk of data evaluation occurs. This is where topics from the initial review of theory and literature interact with fieldwork results to explore the relevance of the theoretical frames that emerged earlier. This chapter exposes strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical concepts and suggests adaptations that reflect the findings of this research.

Chapter 9 provides a brief summary of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Worldviews in the literature

This research considers the extent to which the differing worldviews of the parties in international development affect their relationships when planning and implementing development projects. Chapter 2 describes some aspects of the worldviews of parties in the development enterprise, as seen in academic literature. While the focus of the thesis is not worldviews, these descriptions lay a necessary foundation for appreciating areas of potential ease or difficulty the parties might have in connecting. After discussing various kinds of worldviews, the chapter looks at religious and secular approaches and introduces the theory of post-secularism. Then, under the heading of *agency*, it considers the theory of patronism and starts the discussion on how this theory fits with worldviews and relationships in international development.

This examination of worldviews is only one part of the necessary literature view. To avoid making the literature review too unwieldy, given that the worldview examination is lengthy and wide-ranging, chapter 2 is devoted to that one topic, and other aspects of the review are deferred to chapter 3.

2.1 Worldviews

The Oxford dictionary defines *worldview* as: ‘a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, etc., constituting a comprehensive outlook on life’ (Oxford dictionary, 2005b). That is a useful starting point. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) present a number of Western worldviews, from Kant in ~1790 to 20th century writers. One helpful description, which Goheen and Bartholomew support, is taken from Dilthey²⁹. They summarised his views as:

a complex of ideas and sentiments, comprising (a) beliefs and convictions about the nature of life and the world, (b) emotional habits and tendencies based on these, and (c) a system of purposes, preferences and principles governing action and giving life unity and meaning (pp. 12-13).

In a simpler statement Creswell (2014) supports that approach, adopting the meaning: ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide actions’ (p. 6).

More thoroughly, Hiebert (2008)³⁰ describes a worldview as the ‘categories, logics and assumptions’ (p. 13f) that underlie our belief systems, which in turn underlie our cultural habits, behaviours and

²⁹ Dilthey wrote over 100 years ago and is cited in Goheen and Bartholomew (2008, pp. 12-14).

³⁰ also Fig 2.1, pp. 33, 266

rituals. He provides a helpful history of the concept of worldview, describing it as having roots in both Western philosophy, similar to Goheen and Bartholomew (2008), and in anthropology. The Western philosophical roots are important for appreciating Western assumptions of how the world works, while the anthropological roots are important to the understandings of different cultures that Westerners encounter in development work. Regarding these latter roots Hiebert (2008) writes:

Anthropologists³¹ ... found deep but radically differing worldviews underlying ... cultures. The more they studied these cultures, the more they became aware that worldviews profoundly shape the ways people see the world and live their lives ... They became aware of still deeper levels of culture that shaped how beliefs are formed – the assumptions that people make about the nature of things, the categories in which they think, and the logic that organizes these categories into a coherent understanding of reality. It became increasingly clear that people live not in the same world with different labels attached to it but in radically different conceptual worlds (pp. 14-15).

Some writers have searched for origins of these various ethnic attitudes and mind-sets. Crocker (1991, pp. 459-460) wrote of development ethics, a major component in achieving effective change, being based on theology or philosophy. Supporting this, while sidestepping discussion of the issue, Storey (2002, pp. 7-8) acknowledged the relevance of theology and philosophy to development ethics. As one practical example, Fernando (1997, p. 167f) noted the effect of religion in the roles given to women in traditional Muslim societies. Batchelor (1981) documented cases where a change of belief system catalysed innovation and progress (especially ch 1 & 10). Sivaraksa (1992) advocated that 'Those who want to change society must understand the inner dimensions of change. It is this sense of personal transformation that religion can provide' (p61). So, putting these together, there have been some assertions, in the international development sector, of the importance of religious beliefs in shaping worldviews, and their importance in shaping projects and programmes.

Putting these descriptions together provides an ontological approach, and that is what is generally used in this thesis. Quoting other authors, Herring (2008) refers to an *ontological worldview* as fitting the 'social and cosmic order' (p. 490) of the world, or 'an original real thing' (p. 486). Ingebrigtsen and Jakobsen (2012) describe a number of approaches to worldview and say that an *ontological approach* is about 'the philosophical study of being' (p. 85). Similarly Tolich and Davidson

³¹ For support Hiebert (2008, pp. 15-25) describes the work of Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Mary Douglas, Robert Redfield, Bronislaw Malinowski, Michael Kearney, Morris Opler, Clifford Geertz, and others. While acknowledging differences between their views, and expressing his own opinions about the applicability of their work, Hiebert's conclusion is that all this anthropological work shows many non-Westerners understand the world in fundamentally different ways from Westerners.

(2011) say 'Ontology describes a set of philosophical beliefs people have about the kinds of thing that exist in the world. Ontological beliefs deal with the question, "What is real?"' (p. 31).

Other kinds of worldview could be considered. For example Creswell (2014) writes of four 'philosophical' worldviews: postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatist (p. 6)³²; Brown (1995)³³ writes of anthropocentric and ecocentric worldviews; Feyerabend (1993) presents an anarchistic view; Ingebrigtsen and Jakobsen (2012) write about epistemological and mechanistic worldviews; Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) major on modern and postmodern worldviews; and Hiebert, (2008), interested more in global anthropology, distinguishes between small-scale oral societies, peasant societies, modern, postmodern, and post-postmodern views, and provides a framework for analysing worldviews. These and other approaches could provide valuable schemata but are not used in this thesis as other theories that emerged provided more meaningful frameworks for my research interests.

Rounding out this discussion, this thesis generally adopts the following description: our worldview is the set of assumptions and beliefs about the nature of life and the world that underlie our cultural habits, values and behaviours.

This is an ontological view in that it starts from underlying assumptions about the nature of the world. Details of these assumptions appear later in this chapter through an examination of literature and theory, and also in subsequent chapters through fieldwork. It is also an active view, as opposed to theoretical or cerebral, in that it acknowledges effects on people's ways of life.

Important to this thesis is Hiebert's (2008) assumption (see previous page) that 'people live ... in radically different conceptual worlds' (pp. 14-15). Experts disagree on details of this. Sen (1999)³⁴ argues that there is a fair degree of universality of values – a 'universalist assumption' (pp. 244-246) – for example regarding tolerance of diversity and a desire for freedom – and he decries a stereotyping of differences between Asian and Western values. De Gruchy (2006), with a background in the conflicts of Nazi Germany and South Africa's apartheid era, wrote of common human values being 'reason, culture, humanity, freedom and tolerance' (p. 101). New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) (2013), as one of its 'key principles to apply in development policy and practice', states 'human rights are universal and cannot be taken away' (p. 3), so explicitly underpinning its approach to delivery of development assistance with some assumed universalities. Similarly, Walls and Triandis (2014, p. 345) claim there are:

³² Among other terms, Creswell (2014, p. 6) supports *paradigms* as a roughly equivalent term to *worldview*.

³³ pp. 191f

³⁴ e.g. chapters 10-11, pp. 227-281

four universal truths in the world; four criteria that people globally believe to be valuable and important. These criteria – mental and physical health, subjective well-being, longevity, and preservation of the natural environment – are widely shared across cultures and can be used to evaluate the success of societies (p. 345).

Douglas (1982)³⁵ supports this global homogeneity to a degree, arguing there is more in common across cultures than popular stereotypes would suggest. So although she constructs a 'grid-group' framework (p. 191) that separates people according to cultural bias, she argues that interpersonal transaction contracts remain holy or sacred regardless of one's position on the grid (p. 192).

However in a later modification to this, she also argues for the existence of 'little local cultures ... [within] cultural homogeneity' (1992, p. 25): she writes that 'a community reaches for cultural homogeneity' and can reach 'some (probably temporary and fragile) consensus' (1992, p. 27).

Corbridge (2002), also, expresses limits to Sen's claims of global values: referring to India's caste system he writes that it can be linked to 'the thesis ... that poor countries suffer from an absence of that sense of "generalized morality"' (p. 199). Regarding trends, Hall (2002)³⁶ denounces increasing moral relativism in Britain in the late 20th century, and Putnam (2002, pp. 404-416)³⁷ describes a complex mixture of international homogeneity and local uniqueness regarding social values such as class structures, inequality and individuality.

Huesca (2002) also pushes both the idea of universal values and local specificities. He writes: 'some scholars argue ... that 'a "global ethics" grounded in principles of democracy and respect for human rights be adopted unilaterally by development agencies' (p. 507); and he writes about 'diversity and pluralism' leading to local solutions, and avoiding 'universal theorizing'. So he acknowledges 'a contradiction ... a theoretical incoherence', that 'permeates the development communication field generally'. More recently, Ariely (2017) argues that globalisation is creating greater unity between cultures, and that 'globalisation is one of the dominant forces in the psychological development of people in our time' (p. 93). However he accepts there are 'differential impact[s]' (p. 95) across cultures. Further, almost by definition, his argument does not fit well with poorer people in the less-developed world as they are largely side-lined from globalisation (Pavcnik, 2009). Gardels (2008) states that Confucianism stands firmly against universality, and favours localised 'concrete realities' (pp. 2, 5). Differences are also emphasised in Benedict's (1934) early anthropological writings, where she wrote: '[different cultures] are travelling along different roads in pursuit of different ends, and these ends and these means in one society cannot be judged in terms of those in another society,

³⁵ p. 188

³⁶ pp. 45-46

³⁷ pp. 404-416

because essentially they are incommensurable' (p. 223).³⁸ In a paper on cultural differences globally, Hofstede (1984) argued that people 'are slowly realising that [management] theories are much less universal than they once assumed' (p. 81).

Many anecdotal accounts describe different cultural habits and the worldview assumptions that underlie those. A few of these include Benedict (1946), Fadiman (2012), Gardner (1991), and Watters (2011). Some writers³⁹ explain how subcultures within a dominant culture can exhibit different requirements, including in the West,⁴⁰ while others have addressed how worldviews affect development issues. Friedrichs (2016) concludes: 'there are genuine normative differences' (p. 82) between cultures, and Boyle (1998) writes of a 'cultural heritage that continues to shape the way people interact with each other ... [and] influence the behaviour of individuals and the nature of their social and political relationships' (p. 98). Box 1, *Universal declaration of human rights*, presents one example in the political sphere of different interpretations of a universally agreed principle.

Box 1: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Human rights could be used as one case study on claims to universality of values. The United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, 1948, despite being somewhat dated and limited in scope is still used as the global standard on human rights, and has been signed by almost all members of the United Nations. However Hashemi and Kureshi (2016) describe how, because the UDHR was considered to have 'a Western or Judeo-Christian bias' (p. 5), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which included all Islamic countries, most of whom had signed the UDHR, issued the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam* (the 'Cairo Declaration') (1990). Hashemi and Kureshi describe differences between the UDHR and the Cairo Declaration in areas of religious freedom, women's rights and political authority. They also describe on-going debates within the Islamic world over these documents and issues.

Summing up regarding the place of worldviews in the discourse about development, and contrary to some writers, my conclusion is that worldviews are a significant differentiator in how partners in the development industry see their work. In particular, as noted earlier, different religion-based assumptions on the nature of the world and humanity have the potential to affect people's attitudes

³⁸ Others describe variations within local ethnic groups. For example Sadeed (2011) writes that within the Afghani people in the turmoil of their civil war of around 2000, 'several parallel universes existed side by side'. Hofstede (1984) also considered that 'the notion of a "Western" culture ... is ... crumbling' (p. 81), and argues against uniform Asian or Middle-Eastern cultures. He defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or society from those of another' (p. 82).

³⁹ For example Adkins, (2015, p. 112) regarding religious attitudes to nursing ethics within a dominantly secular society; Krog (2015, p. 203) regarding 'an indigenous African worldview' affecting South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and Newlin Lew, Arbau, Banach, & Melkus (2015, p. 1162) about differences within the USA between African-American church leaders and Western secular values. Examples abound regarding New Zealand's different ethnicities (e.g. Henry and Pene (2001, pp. 234-242); and Walker, Eketone and Gibbs (2006, p. 331)).

⁴⁰ For example, looking more generally than specific local issues, Christian (1999, p. 13) wrote about worldview factors that perpetuate poverty; Connell (1997, pp. 254-255) about power structures; Fowler (1997, pp. 193-194) about preconditions for development; Kabeer (1994) about women-in-development (WID) agendas; Kaplan (2000, pp. 517-526) about organisational cultures; Mann (1999, p. 108) about openness to new thinking; and Streeten (1997, p. 204) about cultural practices that some find abhorrent.

to, for example, ethics including gender issues, attitudes to innovation and change, and dynamics of personal transformation. So religion might have the potential to inform conversations about goals and methods in development programmes. That potential will be explored in the sections ahead.

Two further questions about worldviews could be relevant here. Firstly there is a question over whether worldviews change over time. Hiebert (2008, pp. 32, 47-48) describes processes of change, and writes 'The danger is that we see worldviews as static forms, rather than as dynamic growing entities that are more akin to living systems than mechanical ones' (p. 266)⁴¹. As noted earlier Hall makes similar comments about trends in Britain, and as another example Goheen and Bartholomew (2008)⁴² provide a description of the evolution of Western worldviews. So these writers consider worldviews evolve rather than remain static. Silzer⁴³ (personal communication, 2019), who leans heavily on Douglas, considers cultures are deeply embedded and take many years to change. However Douglas (1992) herself states: 'All historical cultures are in transition. Cultural stability is short-lived, homogeneity achieved with difficulty and always about to dissolve' (p. 25). The difference between Silzer and Douglas is possibly over timescales for change: the view of a practitioner (Silzer) versus an anthropologist (Douglas). A further question is whether worldviews are held subconsciously rather than fully consciously. Hiebert (2008)⁴⁴ writes of the way we unconsciously develop our worldviews, so 'they are generally unexamined and largely implicit' (pp. 46-47)⁴⁵. These two questions do not need to be addressed in detail here but will become important to understanding the fieldwork results and will appear in more detail in later chapters⁴⁶.

The following sections describe some key components of worldview that are relevant to this research project.

2.2 Religion and development

Religion and its counterpart, secularity, are the main focus of the theoretical context of my thesis. I accept there is a complex, chicken-and-egg, debate about how worldview and religion interact: I acknowledge that debate but it does not need to be resolved in this thesis. I also note that this thesis does not try to resolve or judge any claims to truth between different viewpoints or theologies – within a religious camp, between religious camps, or between religious and secular camps – but to highlight similarities and differences in worldview that have the potential to create synergies or misunderstandings in development. This section describes religion in a development context,

⁴¹ See also pp. 32, 47-48

⁴² p. 11-14

⁴³ Dr Sheryl Takagi Silzer is an American-Japanese anthropologist who ran workshops I attended in Christchurch in August 2017 and October 2019.

⁴⁴ pp. 33, 266

⁴⁵ See also pp. 33, 266

⁴⁶ Particularly section 8.2.1

including its history and characteristics. Arguments around its place vis-à-vis secularity are expounded later in this chapter in sections 2.6 and 2.7.

Considering what religion might mean in the context of development, Rakodi (2012a) states that while 'there is no agreed definition of religion' (p. 640), people describe it in either determinative or functional terms, or a mixture of both. She combines these, favouring a description of religion as 'a set of core beliefs and teachings' that connects with right practical living, an element of spirituality and mysticism, and ritual⁴⁷. Moore (2011, p. 22) provides a substantially similar description but I have drawn mainly on Rakodi due to her fuller explanations. Rakodi (2012a) explains that 'the emphasis placed on each of these [dimensions] varies between the religious traditions' (p. 640), and the boundaries between religious groups is often blurred. She also draws a distinction between what she calls 'lived religion', meaning what is seen 'in people's day-to-day lives and socio-political structures and processes'; and 'formal religious teaching about beliefs and moral principles' (2011b, p. 74)⁴⁸. Lunn (2009) considers religion is 'an institutionalised system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm' (p. 937), or: 'religion is multifaceted and not only includes institutionalised religion but also personal beliefs and practices, spirituality and faith' (p. 948). She identifies three aspects of religion that she considers are relevant to development: 'religious organisations, religious values and religious world-views' (p. 938). Clarke and Ware (2015) focus on one aspect, writing: 'Faith [or religion] is widely understood as the acceptance of some ultimate reality beyond this realm and that achieving the highest level of well-being requires us to have insight into or right relationship with this unseen order' (p. 39). They assert 'Religious belief is relevant to both social and private realms' (p. 39). Bradley (2013, p. 8) writes of religion in a functional sense, as 'a source of compassion, ... a strong moral code, ... [as providing] a lens through which [people in developing countries] see and relate to the world, ... a sense of identity'. Like Clarke and Ware (2015), to Bradley, religion can be both 'a private affair' (p. 8) and 'a public force' (p. 9). In addition to their talk about an ultimate reality, Clarke and Ware (2015) write:

Religion ... provides a meaning for existence through which adherents interpret their own circumstances and make decisions on how to act and interact within wider society based on religious teachings. ... [That includes] responding to those that are materially poor. This provides an important resource for addressing poverty (p. 39).

Supporting the idea of meaning, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 51) conclude: 'Development research on religion is ... first and foremost about studying the meanings that people give to their social

⁴⁷ See Rakodi (2007, pp. 17-20) for an expanded description

⁴⁸ See also Rakodi (2012a, p. 647) for further details

practices and religious adherence' (p. 51). These authors also refer to four 'domains' to religion: a discourse with transcendental concerns, a set of practices, a community, and institutions.

For the purpose of this thesis, *religion* is treated as a system of beliefs, either personal or communal, which includes a transcendent power, gives meaning to life, and shapes behaviours, values and hopes. So depending on its comprehensiveness, it may implicitly or explicitly shape or become the worldview of an individual or community.

This definition is not intended to reject as unimportant other elements such as rituals or symbols, or to discard institutional aspects⁴⁹. However, for this thesis, when looking at the role of religion in relationships between partners in international development, these more ontological understandings will dominate.

Looking at recent history of religion and development, Lunn (2009) states: 'over the past 60 years ... religion has been largely under-represented in both development literature and practice' (p. 939), and she refers to 'the long term absence of religion in development theory' (p. 940). This, she considered, came from a worldview where, to many Westerners, religion was seen as something 'private and personal' (p. 940) so writings on religion in development became 'sidelined' in discussion on policy: or as Bosch (1991) says, religion was relegated to 'human feeling and experience' (p. 269). Lunn (2009) also wrote that 'religion was seen as an impediment to economic advancement, irrelevant for modern societies and something that would fade away in time' (p. 939). Similarly, McGregor, Skeaff, & Bevan (2012) wrote that religious institutions are seen 'more as a barrier than as an asset to good development' (p. 1141). Those themes of religion being seen to be 'irrelevant ... and a constraint on progress' (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011, p. 45) are reported by, amongst others, Barton (2018)⁵⁰, Cochrane (2016)⁵¹, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011)⁵², Mitchell (2017)⁵³, and Tyndale (2000)⁵⁴.

However to introduce discussion on a renaissance of religion in development, Lunn (2009) goes on to say:

As far back as the 1970s development practitioners began to acknowledge that development comprises many dimensions and that the political, social, cultural, spiritual and environmental sit alongside the economic and technical ... the recognition of these

⁴⁹ A complementary view is from Geertz (1973) who, in keeping with his emphasis on symbols when studying anthropology, wrote that religion is 'a set of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations ... by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence' (p. 90). That description is not relevant to this thesis.

⁵⁰ pp. 372, 456f

⁵¹ p. 89

⁵² pp. 45-49

⁵³ p. xvi

⁵⁴ pp. 9-10

dimensions to development was an important step en route to developing ideas about holistic development which incorporates different religious world-views (p. 946).

Table 1 shows some statistics that help create a perspective on the prevalence of religion globally, now and as predicted for the mid-21st century:

Table 1: Religious affiliations globally⁵⁵

| Categories | Current – 2010 | Predicted – 2050 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Having a religious affiliation | 84% | 87% |
| Having no religious affiliation | 16% | 13% |

The proportions with religious identity are higher in less developed countries, ((Pew Research Center, 2015), (Mitchell, 2017)⁵⁶) with about 90% of people there professing religious adherence. Clarke (2007) writes of ‘faith as an analytical lens through which the poor experienced and rationalised poverty’ (p. 78), and ‘faith is a key element of cultural identity’ (p. 90).

Cochrane (2016) considers two assumptions have ‘underpinned’ the renaissance of religion in development: ‘(1) that religious organizations and people are widely involved in the work to overcome poverty, and (2) that their differences can be overcome given the humanitarian moral responsibility they share’ (p. 89). The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (2014) states, regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ‘these needs are precisely what religions and other faith traditions grapple with. Faith is arguably the terrain where justice, peace and the struggle against inequality interface’ (p. 2). Duff, Battcock, Karam, & Taylor (2016) consider ‘the holistic approach of the SDGs offers a common framework for harnessing the distinctive assets of religious and faith-based organizations’: ‘common’ referring to an approach that includes ‘national plans and global collaborations’ (p. 95). The same paper also describes the involvement of faith based organisations

⁵⁵ These statistics are based on reports by Pew Research Center, ((2012), (2015) and (2018)). Some qualifications should be noted. Firstly the 2012 report stated ‘The religiously unaffiliated population includes atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any particular religion in surveys. However, many of the religiously unaffiliated do hold religious or spiritual beliefs’ (p. 8). But, counterbalancing that, the report also stated that it did not ‘attempt to measure the degree to which members of these groups actively practice their faiths or how religious they are’ (p. 7). So, from this study, the numbers of actively religious people, or people for whom religion significantly shapes their worldviews could be higher or lower than 84%. This thesis adopts these Pew Research Center figures at face value. Quoting the Pew Forum and other research, Rakodi (2012a, p. 647) points out a number of reasons for taking some statistics lightly, and Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) note ‘estimates of religiosity are difficult to make and vary considerably, in particular depending on the question asked’ (p. 47). While supporting the World Values Survey (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>) as an ‘invaluable database’ they warn of dubious outputs from surveys conducted by multiple people, with ‘over-simplified conceptions’ (p. 50) that will be interpreted differently in different cultures, situations and circumstances. Perhaps the predictions the 2015 study made of the future growth of religiousness in the world, extrapolating from those suspect current statistics, should be held even more lightly.

⁵⁶ p. 8

(FBOs) in the early stages of the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs (p. 96).

The paragraphs above note the continuing prevalence of religion globally, and especially in less developed countries, and introduce indications of its involvement in the development enterprise. Debates and further details of the fall and rise of religion in development appear in sections 2.6 and 2.7.

Equally important is an understanding of the content of what religion might be claimed to contribute to development.

Bradley (2013) states: 'Researchers ... argue that faith holds the potential to shape and nurture communities of freedom – religion can increase human capabilities' (p. 11). As one instance Paras (2014) quotes an FBO – a 'religion lite' example, that is an organisation that does not engage in religious proselytising – as saying its 'philosophy of development is grounded in an understanding of Christian theology that sees the promotion of social justice and human rights as the true mission of the Church' (p. 447). An approach that is potentially more interactive with religion, and potentially more confrontational comes from Baumgart-Ochse, Glaab, Smith, & Smythe (2017) who write:

a transcendental perspective on progress can empower improvements towards social justice by encouraging and limiting human agency at the same time. The rejection of a discredited modernist linear view of progress in favor of a transcendent one facilitates finding common ground for religious and secular motivated projects of global social justice (p. 1070).

Continuing a variety of comments on religious perspectives, Harrington (2007) quotes Habermas as saying that 'religion provides "orienting pictures of unspoilt forms of life" that offer "an at once limiting and disclosing horizon", images that "inspire and encourage us" in our repeated efforts at cooperatively bringing about the good' (p. 545). He also refers to modernity, and hence, in his terms, secularity as assuming an 'anthropocentric perspective' (pp. 555-556), whereas a religious view comes from a 'theological perspective'. For implementation, Bradley (2013) writes of 'culture [and religion] as possessing the capacity to inspire people, to motivate them into action ... and development practitioners operating with a secular view miss the opportunity to capture this energy and use it to achieve radical transformation' (p. 23). This 'would help to illuminate further the complexities of life and the often creative ways through which people navigate barriers'. Cochrane (2016) writes of religion's normative dimension being 'an insistence on human dignity with its imperative to treat each person [as] an end in her-himself' (p. 89), and of religion facilitating an 'extraordinary creative capacity' and 'hope ... that we can transcend those limits [of short-term survival needs]' (pp. 91-92). Tyndale (2000) considered

None of the religions is likely to come up with a blueprint for an alternative development model, but they all have ideas about what the elements of such a model, or models, should be. The notion of right human relationships is at the heart of many of these ideas (See also Tyndale, (pp. 13, 17)).

Tyndale (2000) emphasised equity and environmental care as two topics where the world's faiths bring distinctive faith-based values that have an element of commonality across religions (pp. 13, 14).

Underlying all religious development activity are assumptions about the nature of life and end goals. Tyndale wrote: 'for the large majority of the world's people, a bedrock of strong ethical principles, based on their religious faith, is an essential prerequisite for long-term economic progress' (p. 9). As discussed in more detail in the next chapter, James (2011) considered one of the distinctive contributions of religion to development is in providing 'hope, meaning, and purpose' (p. 111); and Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) argue for religion and development studies being a natural fit, stating: 'both development studies and religion are concerned with the meaning of "progress" or a "better life"' (p. 45).

More fundamentally, a main motif in current Christian theology is the idea that people are looking forward to and working towards the 'kingdom of God'. While acknowledging Christianity comes in many different shapes, this thesis looks at that faith as presented in writings in the field of development studies or by development organisations. Major writings in recent decades include books by Bosch (1991), de Gruchy (2006), Hiebert (2008), Mitchell (2017), Myers (2011) and Wright (2007). As Myers puts it: 'Jesus said that the kingdom of God was the first thing we should seek and that everything else will follow ... an important idea for those who work for human transformation' (p. 88). These writers speak fairly much with one voice on this topic, and the following description summarises their views.

At its most basic, to Christians this kingdom of God is where God or Jesus is king. The obligation to work towards establishing God's kingdom is highlighted (see, e.g. Wright, (2007, p. 213)) in biblical passages⁵⁷ such as the Lord's Prayer: 'your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10): which Mitchell (2017) describes as 'as much a statement of call as it is of invocation' (p. 15). This 'call' is a strong motivator for involvement in global development. Key elements of this kingdom are, firstly, that 'Jesus remain the ultimate reference point' (Hiebert, 2008,

⁵⁷ Here I write of *biblical* views rather than *Christian* or *Western*. Western values are dominated by the assumptions of the Enlightenment and modernity. Christian values are the product of the Christian church at any given time and place. By contrast, biblical values, while underlying much of Western and Christian understandings, and while being open, themselves, to a variety of interpretations, are more comprehensive than *Western* and more stable than *Christian*. A biblical approach is one of a range of religious approaches that could be taken, some of which differ from a biblical view. A biblical approach is relevant in discussing global development in that its teachings have had a large influence in shaping the worldviews of major players in development.

p. 279). This requires that development will include verbalising the biblical message of who Jesus is and his present and future role, and calling people into some sort of relationship with him (Mitchell, 2017, p. 40). Quoting from early biblical prophets (Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14), Wright (2007) agrees, saying the goal is that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (p. 217). To Hiebert (2008) holistic development ‘speaks of spiritual realities – the relationships of communities of faith and individuals to God, to one another, and to the world in which they live’ (p. 324).

A second element is that of timing where, for example, Myers (2011) writes of achieving the outcomes at ‘the end of time’ (p. 174), and ‘The kingdom of God is the future that has already invaded history and that is growing ... in the present’ (p. 175): a classic ‘already-but-not-yet’ perception. Wright (2007) speaks of the Christian church being

the story of God’s kingdom being launched on earth as it is in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been decisively launched, and Jesus’ followers have been commissioned and equipped to put that victory and that inaugurated new world, into practice (p. 217).

A third element is that followers of Jesus are working, not just as agents of God, but in partnership with him, and can expect his active involvement in their work. Mitchell (2017, p. 43) states: ‘God is the ultimate change agent in the world and ... development practitioners are working cooperatively in this God-inspired agenda’⁵⁸. Wright (2007) considers humans are God’s ‘agents of transformation of this earth’ and that God is longing to ‘rescue humans in order that humans might be his rescuing stewards over creation’ (p. 214). Those three elements are uniquely religious in that there is a divine focus and component that does not fit with secular assumptions.

However those high-level views lead to a fourth element, that of the scope of development and its values. While these are presented here as outcomes of biblical theology, they might be less distinctively religious and could provide a space where religious and secular views might intersect more easily. Myers (2011) asserts this kingdom of God is both individual and social, and it addresses the shape of politics, economics and religion (p. 89). He also adds environmental values (p. 183). Mitchell (2017) says ‘A core tenet of the Christian faith is social transformation’ (p. xv), and he lists facets of life where biblical values inform development practices: children’s rights, gender values, communalism, non-discrimination, advocacy regarding injustices, crossing lines of stigmatisation, and care for the vulnerable (p. 77). He also considers biblical values contribute understandings to ‘four

⁵⁸ Myers (2011) could be interpreted as advocating a more passive human role, writing that development workers ‘are not the bringers of the kingdom, only witnesses to its arrival’ (p. 88). However it is likely that in that statement he is referring to divine intervention in the particular event of Jesus’ birth and life, as he advocates consistently that humanity should be involved in the on-going task of development work.

key areas where religious beliefs may intersect ... with development goals: conflict prevention and peace-building, governance, wealth creation and production, and health and education' (p. 78). De Gruchy (2006, p. 34f)⁵⁹ majors on trying to work together. He considers that, while we must 'make our unique contribution' (p. 102), there can be greater empathy between Christians and secularists of goodwill, despite their religious disagreements, than there is sometimes within the secular or Christian religious camps. He went further, suggesting that secularists and atheists who practice biblical values in their relationships with others might know God better than religious people who claim to know God but do not practise his values (p. 141). One phrase these writers use frequently is a biblical expression that humanity is made 'in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27). As Mitchell (2017) says, that understanding 'lays an important foundation' (p. 16), placing a high value on all humans, and spinning off to numerous applications in development practice⁶⁰. However, to be distinctively religious again, key parts of those views include an assertion that full human development requires a relationship of some sort with Jesus.

A recipient counterpart to Western Christian aims could be deduced from surveys of the aspirations of the predominantly religious recipients. One example is from Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch, (2000) who define development as:

equitable wellbeing for all, to put the bottom poor high on the agenda, to recognize power as a central issue, and to give voice and priority to poor people. It is to enable poor women and men to achieve what they perceive as a better life (p. 263).

Or:

The meaning of development ... a reorientation of development priorities, practice and thinking. It reinforces the case for making the wellbeing of those who are worse off the touchstone for policy and practice ... The bottom poor, in all their diversity, are excluded, impotent, ignored and neglected; the bottom poor are a blind spot in development ... increments in wellbeing that would mean much to the poor widow in Bangladesh – a full stomach, time for prayer, and a bamboo platform to sleep on (p. 264).

Chapters 5 to 7 will address this further through fieldwork outputs.

Recipients' perceptions of poverty help build a picture of their development goals. Three reports with Narayan as lead author ((Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher, & Koch-Schulte, 2000)⁶¹, (Narayan, Chambers, et al., 2000)⁶² and (Narayan & Petesch, 2002)⁶³), from a survey of 60,000 poor

⁵⁹ See also pp. 184-193

⁶⁰ De Gruchy (2006, p. 195) has a particular application regarding human creativity.

⁶¹ pp. 35, 64, 266, 278

⁶² pp. 26, 27

⁶³ p. 1

people, plus World Bank (2005)⁶⁴, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016)⁶⁵, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017) emphasise that poverty is multi-dimensional. They list aspects such as income, purchasing power, vulnerability to calamities, physical infrastructure, culture, relationships, education, political power or 'agency', security and freedom of speech. A core concern was for people to be able to provide for their children's future. One surprising wish was to be able to attend to body image with cosmetics: this was presented as one element of a desire for dignity and respect. Particularly relevant to this thesis, poverty, for many, included concerns about being able to weave into their routines 'a spiritual life and religious observance' (Narayan, Chambers, et al., 2000, p. 38). As these authors explained: 'Spirituality, faith in God and connecting to the sacred in nature are an integral part of poor people's lives in many parts of the world' (p. 222)⁶⁶. Without expanding on what he means, Vander Zaag (2013a) refers to a 'faith-based understanding of poverty and approaches to social change' (p. 321). World Vision (2015b)⁶⁷, drawing on Myers (2011)⁶⁸, writes: 'Poverty is considered to be the result of broken relationships – with self, the community, God and the environment. Therefore, many activities seek to restore or transform relationships in communities' ((p. vi)⁶⁹).

Christian (1999) writes how poverty is the 'result of marred identity of the poor' (pp. 3-27), and adds:

poverty is systemic and structural, and it requires a response that addresses the whole situation, including a look at beliefs, values and spiritual practices. Any claims to sustainability without addressing these root causes of poverty is shallow (and likely to be unsuccessful/ unattainable) (in World Vision, (2017, p. 45)).

These foci are similar to Mitchell (2017), who writes that in addition to 'a deficit of things ... poverty can also include deficits of ... community support, human rights, civic voice, and spiritual and social participation' (p. xxiii). World Vision goes on to list three foci: 'a grassroots presence', 'inter-faith relations and partnerships with faith-based organisations', and 'the spiritual nurture of children' (p. vi). This 'spiritual nurture of children' is further described as aiming for resilience, hope, empowerment, a love for God and neighbours, confidence, self-awareness, communal support and participation in their communities, understanding of child rights, life skills and leadership

⁶⁴ p. 9

⁶⁵ pp. 1-4

⁶⁶ Narayan et al.'s (2000, p. 229) informants were aware of what they saw as downsides to religiosity, as: 'Some Catholic and Muslim participants criticized the tendency of religious organizations to focus on rebuilding churches and mosques when people are still going hungry'.

⁶⁷ This thesis refers frequently to World Vision as it seems to have researched and published more material than other NGOs on the themes of the thesis.

⁶⁸ pp. 143-180

⁶⁹ Similarly in World Vision (2015a, p. 5)

development, and value formation ((2015b)⁷⁰; (2015a)⁷¹). World Vision (2015a)⁷² also reports on relationship building through inter-faith dialogue, in HIV recognition and treatment programmes, and in rebuilding a public role for churches. It states that its 'Christian faith' informs its programmes by emphasising 'spiritual nurture, social connectedness, civic life skills, value formation, personal skills and safety' (p. 9). Through this, people will 'experience the love of God and their neighbour, even if those activities are not explicitly Christian or religious in nature'. It says (2015a) that this matches the desire of recipients 'for children to experience the love of God, even if in non-Christian contexts this was not through Christian religious activities, or understood by children through a Christian framework' (p. 10).

It is acknowledged that other Christian writers have different emphases or disagree with some of the views above⁷³, and that many workers in Christian FBOs might not have such a developed theology⁷⁴. Further, opinions can change with time: as Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) conclude: 'Religions ... are dynamic and subject to conflicts over the interpretation of their core teachings and how these should influence individual lives and social institutions' (p. 51). It is acknowledged also that this exposition includes only views of Christian religious writers⁷⁵. And finally it is repeated that this thesis does not address the question of truth in the claims of Christianity, other religions or secularity. But, given the prominence of Christian FBOs in the development enterprise, as described in the next chapter, these descriptions can be assumed to flavour a significant portion of global development activity.

Lunn (2009), despite listing significant features of religion as providing 'an alternative moral framework for development' (p. 945), acknowledges accusations of colonialism, patronism, and support for values that today are generally rejected, including violent confrontation. Those perceptions will inevitably affect relationships with both recipients and donors. However the comments in this section also show the potential for a shared heart connection through religion between recipients and FBOs.

⁷⁰ pp. 14-15

⁷¹ p. 9

⁷² pp. 6f

⁷³ However Bosch argued in 1991 that 'Today [different branches of the Christian church] grasp in a more profound manner than ever before something of the depth of evil in the world, the inability of human beings to usher in God's reign, and the need for both personal renewal by God's Spirit *and* resolute commitment to challenging and transforming the structures of society' (pp. 407-408).

⁷⁴ Wright (2007) acknowledges that the "'kingdom of God" has been a flag of convenience under which all sorts of ships have sailed' (p. 216).

⁷⁵ Rakodi (2011a) provides a helpful comment on different emphases between the main religions. She states 'Christianity is traditionally said to put more emphasis on beliefs, influencing European colonists' assumptions about the nature of other religions, whereas Islam emphasizes detailed rules to guide behaviour over elaborate statements of belief, and Hinduism and Buddhism concentrate on ritual practices and personal transformation rather than uniformity of belief' (p. 8). Sivaraksa (1992), a Buddhist activist, largely endorses that assessment of Buddhism. With some modifications this topic will reappear in fieldwork findings.

2.3 Secularism and development

Early dabbling in fieldwork made it plain that secularism would be a key issue for this thesis in understanding the worldviews of the participants. This section describes secularism, its history and nature, and introduces its relevance to international development. Debates around its applicability vis-à-vis religion are deferred to sections 2.6 and 2.7.

While acknowledging a variety of views Wilson (2017)⁷⁶ says secularism assumes there is no God or supernatural reality, and de Gruchy (2006) says it sees ‘no need for recourse to any power or meaning beyond being human’ (p. 85-86). Habermas (2008) describes ‘secularism’ as an approach ‘based on scientific assumptions’ (p. 27) but he does not explain what he means by ‘scientific assumptions’⁷⁷. On that topic Bosch (1991) amplifies that in secularity we saw ‘the *elimination of purpose* from science and the introduction of direct causality as the clue to the understanding of reality’ (p. 265), so: ‘Religion could exist alongside science, but without ... ever impinging on [it]’ (p. 472). Tomalin (2012) provides a fuller description of secularism:

The term secular is used in different, but linked, ways. It can be used to refer to the separation of religion from the state or public life, while still allowing for private religious belief and practice. It can also refer to the absence of religion more broadly, or a situation where one religious tradition is not prioritised above others (p. 701).

Expanding on that, Ager and Ager (2016) refer to

three meanings of the term secular ... One relates to constitutional organization at the level of the state with respect to religious expression, while another refers to a condition of reduced religious belief and practice within a society [and another] to “a context of understanding” that establishes certain conditions for belief ... [leading to] blindness of secularism to its presumptions ... [and] the privatization, marginalization, and instrumentalization of religion (pp. 102-103).

Barton (2018), looking at late 19th century western Europe, an age of ‘science militant’ (p. 370f), emphasises the first of Ager and Ager’s meanings, writing: ‘secularization was a political process ... [Some leading scientists] wanted a society in which no particular religion was privileged and no religious traditions imposed on citizens’ (pp. 31, 464). She also adds that to some, secularisation was a process of ‘seeking to change beliefs ... [a] missionary or evangelistic work, persuading people to behave differently’ (p. 31).

⁷⁶ p. 1084

⁷⁷ As quoted below [‘a scientific mind cannot be easily reconciled with theocentric and metaphysical worldviews’] Habermas would appear to consider that religion is unscientific and incompatible with science.

Habermas (2008), whose writings on post-secularity will be addressed later, considered ‘there is a close linkage between the modernization of society and secularization of the population. [That] hypothesis rests on three initially plausible considerations’ which were ‘the main reasons for the secularization thesis’.

First, progress in science and technology promotes an *anthropocentric understanding* of the ... world because ... states and events can be causally explained; and a scientific mind cannot be easily reconciled with theocentric and metaphysical worldviews. Second, with the *functional differentiation of social subsystems*, the churches and other religious organizations lose their control ...; they restrict themselves to their proper function of administering the means of salvation, turn exercising religion into a private matter and in general lose public influence and relevance. Finally, the development from agrarian ... to post-industrial societies leads to ... greater social security; and with ... the ensuing increase in existential security, there is a drop in the personal need for a practice that promises to cope with uncontrolled contingencies through faith in a “higher” or cosmic power (pp. 17-18).

Like Barton, but bringing her 19th century perspective to today’s world, Griffiths (2011) also uses Ager and Ager’s (2016) political meaning, discussing the place of secularity in public or constitutional contexts (p. 498). He states: ‘the legal concept of the “secular” is amenable to several interpretations ... which depend on constitutional and historical factors that are peculiar to the polity in question’. He amplifies ‘plausible definitions of “secular” as that word is understood in countries within the liberal democratic fold’ (p. 502), saying there are

at least three fundamentally different types of church-state relationship: one that envisages a radical rooting-out of religion from all corners of the public sphere; one that is simply indifferent to religion; and one that is more permissive and does not hesitate to remove burdens on religious believers while going about their public or private business (p. 502).

The words *secular* and its derivatives, *secularism*, *secularist*, etc. can have different shades of meaning, particularly regarding the level of intentionality in removing religious understandings from public life (e.g. Griffiths (2011)⁷⁸; and de Gruchy, (2006)⁷⁹). Habermas (2008), for example, describes *secular* as having an ‘indifferent stance’, relating ‘agnostically to religious validity claims’; and ‘secularist’ as adopting ‘a polemical stance towards religious doctrines that maintain a public influence’ (p. 27). However in this thesis these distinctions are not generally important and are not followed strictly.

⁷⁸ pp. 498f

⁷⁹ pp. 81, 87-88

Historically, Brown (2007), writing of Britain, describes a century of secularisation from 1900. This took two forms. There was 'de-Christianization of the state' (pp. 394-395), seen in the state's disengagement in its governance functions from the established churches. And 'underlying and empowering' that disengagement was 'the decline of popular religious faith, behaviour and identity' seen in a decline in practical religious adherence, and in a rejection of religiously influenced cultural habits regarding, for example, sex, alcohol, and observance of Sundays (pp. 4-5). Some of this change, Brown considers, was promoted by churches themselves in a backlash against strict Victorian practices (p. 4). This all led to a 'sociological understanding of the historical inevitability of the end of religion' (p. 7), and this was 'the dominant and ongoing religious condition of British society and government' (p. 3). It would be reasonable to assume a similar process occurred in New Zealand as it was a colony of Britain, although it seems New Zealand might have retained a higher rate of church attendance than Britain⁸⁰. Brown also writes that the 'conservative militancy' of modern religion, which is to some extent a product of secularisation, 'has long represented an uncomfortable "other" which appeared to challenge the declining faith in Britain' (p. 17). So 'the decline of religious belief in Britain [showed] a fatal moral weakness of the nation' (p. 17). Further he writes that 'The ideas that "religion is harmless" and that it was "nice" were arguably the mark of British secularization ... Until around 1989, it seemed that the slide from faith was painless, one-way and relentless' (p. 23): '[Britain] had looked ... upon religion as a languid, largely passive and mostly benign element in [the] world' (p. 25)⁸¹. However he conceded 'our imaginings of the secular condition ... are often vague, ill-considered or even not considered at all' (p. 24).

As in Barton (2018), Habermas (2008) traces the emergence of secularism back further than Brown's 20th century, to 'the confessional wars of early modernity' (p. 22), which led to separating church and state; and de Gruchy (2006)⁸² and Gonzalez (2010)⁸³ go back to a similar era, the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2007/2013)⁸⁴ go much further, tracing secularism's origins to the time of Plato, around 400 BCE. Habermas's concept of the secularism that evolved was 'this precious achievement, the inclusive religious freedom that is extended to all citizens alike' (p. 22). It was about 'believers of one faith, of a different faith and non-believers ...

⁸⁰ Brown (2007) writes that 'by 1998, only 7.5% of the English people attended church on a Sunday' (p. 395), and Hay and Hunt (2000, p. 11) give similar figures. These can be compared with Matheson's (2006, p. 183) 10% to 20% for New Zealand. The bases of these figures are not given by either author, and would need to be known before stating whether the comparison is valid.

⁸¹ Hay and Hunt (2000) document a decline in attendance of mainline churches in Britain over the latter part of the 20th century. However, as of 1997, in an increase from previous surveys, 'slightly more than 76% of the national population are now likely to admit to having had a spiritual or religious experience' (p. 11). The authors postulate that the increase might not be real, but might come from a greater social acceptability of admitting to spirituality (p. 12). This topic is relevant to an understanding of secularity in the West but has not been addressed for this thesis. It could be pursued in further research.

⁸² p. 84

⁸³ p. 184

⁸⁴ p. 124

[mutually conceding] to one another the right to those convictions, practices and ways of living that they themselves reject' (2008, p. 23). It is about tolerance, the rights of individuals and communities, the 'inclusion of minorities in civil society' (p. 24), and not about '*appreciation* of an alien culture' (p. 23). So Habermas's secularism has a more formal and probably limited role than the underlying cultural ethos that Brown writes of. Harrington (2007) agrees that 'Habermas's most burning concerns in his recent writings on religion are political in character' (p. 547). This does not deny that Habermas recognises what Harrington calls 'a more existential kind of conflict between reason and faith' (p. 548). Habermas (2008) goes on to say that 'a change in mentality cannot be prescribed, nor can it be politically manipulated or pushed through by law' (p. 28), thus agreeing with the power of underlying cultural and worldview assumptions: a 'more primordial' conflict (Harrington, 2007, p. 548). Further, as above, Brown (2007) sees organisational secularity as rooted in a pervasive societal assumption that religion is outmoded.

Turning to international development, Mitchell (2017) describes the outcomes of that societal ethos as including, now, the 'persistent exclusion of the role of religion from development studies' (pp. 5-7). Going back to a quote from Ager and Ager (2016), regarding three meanings of the term secular, those writers say that for the subject of international development secularisation is mainly about "'a context of understanding" that establishes certain conditions for belief' (p. 102), leading to: 'blindness of secularism to its presumptions' and 'the privatization, marginalization, and instrumentalization of religion' (p. 103). They consider it is distinct from other meanings in that it is a way of societal thinking that gives priority to secularity and acquiesces to 'its claims of self-evident universality'. With a more limited focus, Lynch and Schwarz (2016) quote Hopgood and Vinjamuri (2012) as defining secularity in development as "'not proselytiz[ing] or discriminat[ing] in aid delivery or hiring"' (p. 639). More broadly Tomalin (2012) writes:

When discussing development organisations, the label secular refers to settings in which the activities and structure of an organisation are not shaped by a religious framework. Although individual employees, volunteers or members may themselves hold a religious faith, which may influence their motivations, religion is not considered to have a formal or direct influence on the organisation (p. 701).

In summary, and for the purpose of this thesis, looking at relationships in international development, the term *secular* and its derivatives refer to both the exclusion of religion from any formal input to shaping or governing development policies and practice, and to a societal ethos that side-lines religion from its thinking. Further, secularity assumes there is no God, or at least no relevance in a God.

Looking at the growth of secularism, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 49) write: 'Development studies was founded on the belief that religion is not important to development processes, for, as societies develop and modernize, it was assumed that they would also undergo a process of secularization'⁸⁵. Secularisation was defined here as

“a process in which religion diminishes in importance both in society and in the consciousness of individuals” ... Thus ... secularization denotes a process by which religion is removed from the public sphere of governance and policy, ... [and] comes to be seen as a matter of individual choice.

Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 46) add that there has been an assumption that 'secularization is a universal, desirable, and irreversible trend'. These authors describe a typology which is similar to that described earlier by Ager and Ager (2016). Deneulin and Rakodi's categorisation postulates three forms of secularisation: religious decline, where the community shows less adherence to formal religious identities or structures; privatisation of religion, where religion becomes primarily an individual concern; and 'differentiation', where religion is separated from other aspects of life, and society and science 'emancipate themselves from the prism of religious institutions and norms' (p. 49). This was important to Sen (1999) who was secular in his worldview and wrote that to all practical purposes it is our human responsibility to deal with humanity's needs without any reference to outside deities (p. 282). That is similar to the writings of other secularists: for example, from an earlier era that helped shape the secularity of the late 20th century, Fromm (1942) wrote: 'there is no higher power than this unique individual self' (p. 93), so rejecting the interventions of any divine being. Paras (2014) stated: 'The overall trend was for secular NGOs⁸⁶ to replace church agencies as the dominant non-state actors involved in the relief and development sector', and they were 'motivated by a "secularised discourse of humanity"' to the extent that 'secular NGOs became the new missionaries of development' (p. 443). She refers to 'the emergence of a secularised, professional development sector in the 1960s' (p. 445).

In a curious irony, Newbigin (1966, p. 18) and others have argued that Christian missionaries have been the most powerful force in recent history for secularising the world. As Kraft (2000) explains: 'a form of Christianity that is comfortable in the West has been transferred to other parts of the world' (p. 1). It has compartmentalised life: 'church for religious life, schools for the educational area, hospitals and clinics for the physical/medical area, organizations promoting developmental technology for the production and health area' (p. 1). By their breadth of influence globally, and by introducing their Western understandings of science, missionaries have reduced the need for

⁸⁵ Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) record, without examination, one possible explanation for USA's religiosity that fits this theory, namely that its 'high level of inequality' (p. 49) has created insecurity.

⁸⁶ Non-governmental organisation

reliance on supernatural forces, and consequently belief in those forces. Bradshaw (1993) also writes extensively on this theme, endorsing Newbigin's and Kraft's views.

Section 2.1.1 of this chapter described a religious view of development goals, and we can consider now what its secular counterpart might look like.

Today the most widely accepted statements of a development vision are contained in the UN's Millennium Declaration (UN, 2000), and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). In 2000, all members of the UN adopted the Millennium Declaration as an ambitious plan of action for the less developed world. The Declaration included (clauses 1 and 2) a framework calling for global peace, prosperity and justice, and 'principles of human dignity, equality and equity'. It affirmed (clause 6) 'fundamental values' of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. It placed strong emphasis (clauses 24 to 28) on human rights, including recognising the most vulnerable people, and it acknowledged special needs of Africa. There were many detailed targets under eight well-known 'millennium development goals' (MDGs): to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and achieve global partnership for development.

Then in 2015, arising from the experience with the Millennium Declaration, the UN members adopted the 2030 Agenda, including 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets. These address (clause 59) poverty⁸⁷ and hunger, health, education, equality including gender equality, water and sanitation, access to energy, economic growth and employment, physical infrastructure, innovation, urban safety, environmental and ecological sustainability, climate change, justice and the rule of law, and institutions and global partnerships for sustainable development. These goals were the detailed expression of an underlying vision (clauses 7 to 9). The Agenda recognised 'that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development' and stated 'we pledge that no one will be left behind' (Preamble). It acknowledged the goals are 'integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental'. For an underlying rationale or set of beliefs, the Agenda is largely silent, and leans on the Charter of the UN, the UDHR, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration, 'the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document', the Right to Development, and various conferences and documents on environmental sustainability (clauses 10 to 13). The Agenda's vision and details generally fit well with the religious visions for development, identified in section 2.2 of this chapter. Particular points of comparison are that the 2030 Agenda, like visions of the kingdom of God,

⁸⁷ Further examination of concepts of poverty was given in section 2.2.

contains many details that are appropriate to the current needs of the world; similar to the biblical expression of humanity ‘made in the image of God’, it champions ‘universal respect for human rights and human dignity’; and it gives a more prominent emphasis to environmental sustainability than do many documents from explicitly religious writers.

I have described these UN documents as representing secular goals. They are promoted by the UN, and they neither contain specifically religious targets nor rest on explicitly religious assumptions. However as noted earlier in section 2.2, and later in 2.7, a number of writers claim the SDGs were developed with input from religious communities, and show the influence and reflect the values of those communities. In addition, for execution, the 2030 Agenda included ‘explicit frameworks for the integration and instrumentalization of religious organizations in pursuit of their goals’ (Feener & Fountain, 2018, p. 4). Implications for acceptance of religion in secular development planning are discussed later in section 2.1.6.

Looking specifically at New Zealand, while it was a signatory to both the Millennium Declaration and the 2030 Agenda, recent documents from MFAT could be interpreted as taking a narrower view. In its strategic plan MFAT (2015b) says: ‘We focus our aid and influence to achieve sustainable, inclusive and resilient development outcomes that meet the aspirations of people in our partner countries. We maintain a thematic focus on sustainable economic development’ (p. 3). This in turn leads to ‘12 investment priorities’ (pp. 12-13), and although some of these, such as health and education, are not *prima facie* economic, they fit under the ‘sustainable economic development’ umbrella. That flavour is endorsed in MFAT’s investment priorities which state: ‘The purpose of New Zealand’s aid is to develop shared prosperity and stability ...’ (2015a, p. 3); and in its partnership guidelines which state ‘the New Zealand Aid Programme’s strategic goals ... [have] a particular focus on sustainable economic development’ (2017, p. 3). Further, these documents in their turn sit under the overarching purpose of MFAT (2019), which states ‘The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade acts in the world to make New Zealanders safer and more prosperous’. So we could infer that, if these documents have a coherent hierarchy, New Zealand’s aid and development programmes are for the benefit of New Zealanders.

The following table – Table 2 – and comments provide some background for understanding the faith base from which New Zealand’s international development operations come. Further insights into its culture regarding secularity are discussed in section 2.6. In Table 2 New Zealand religious affiliations are shown in three broad categories for 1966, about 50 years ago; and for the most recent census for which results are published, that is 2013. Regarding church attendances, Matheson, writing in 2006, said these are ‘now ranging between 10% and 20% of the population’ (p. 183), but he also referred to a large number of believing non-attenders.

Table 2: Religious affiliations in New Zealand⁸⁸

| | 1966 ⁸⁹ | 2013 ⁹⁰ |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Christian | 98% | 49% |
| Other religions | 0.3% | 8% |
| No religion | 2% | 43% |

Addressing New Zealand law, Griffiths (2011) describes how secularity is seen after passing of the Bill of Rights Act in 1990 (NZ Government, 1990)⁹¹. As above, he describes different ways the term ‘secular’ can be applied in church-state relationships (p. 501), and argues that regarding ‘the modern notion of secularism ... the New Zealand state is of the permissive or liberal secular type’ (p. 524). This type ‘does not hesitate to remove burdens on religious believers while going about their public or private business – so long as this does not unduly hinder the enjoyment of rights held by other citizens or undermine important public-policy goals’ (p. 501). New Zealand ‘does not have a freestanding secular principle anywhere in its constitution’ (p. 514), that is, any references to secularity are tied to particular circumstances. But he goes on to say that New Zealand’s understanding of secularism ‘is an uneven one, causing much confusion’ and it leaves the debate open regarding questions of a role for religion in the public sphere, with ambiguities occurring in education, Parliament and other forums.

This discussion has portrayed a mainly dichotomous relationship between secularity and religion. Clearly that is often a reality but, as indicated by the comment on the evolution of the UN’s Millennium Declaration and 2030 Agenda, equally clearly it is an over-simplification. The extent of connection will be addressed later in this chapter in sections 2.6 and 2.7.

2.4 Excluded middle

As a way of depicting the dichotomies between religion and secularity, writers such as Bradshaw (1993)⁹², Hiebert (2008)⁹³, and Myers (2011)⁹⁴ propose the concept of an *excluded middle*, and this

⁸⁸ These figures are percentages from those who answered the census question, which is less than the total population.

⁸⁹ New Zealand official year book (Department of Statistics, 1969, pp. 84-85)

⁹⁰ From Table 30, (Department of Statistics, 2018)

⁹¹ The Bill of Rights Act (NZ Government, 1990) guarantees freedom of religion, including (s 13) ‘the right to adopt and to hold opinions without interference’, and (s 15) ‘the right to manifest that person’s religion or belief ... either individually or in community with others, and either in public or in private’. Its focus is on the rights of individuals to those freedoms.

⁹² pp. 21-46, 169-175

⁹³ chapter 4, pp. 89-104

⁹⁴ pp. 5-12

seems a helpful way of understanding the clashes between worldviews. The concept is explained here in three steps, and the thesis returns to it in sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2.

Figure 3 represents a modern⁹⁵ or secular worldview, which postulates a clear and firm material universe which, to all practical purposes, is all that exists. It postulates that, if a spiritual or religious universe does exist, its role is limited and fading, and it is separated from the material universe by a gap or barrier that does not allow communication between the two. Hiebert (2008) considers ‘This framework of separated areas of life is also deeply embedded in the Western part of the Christian church’ (p. 6).

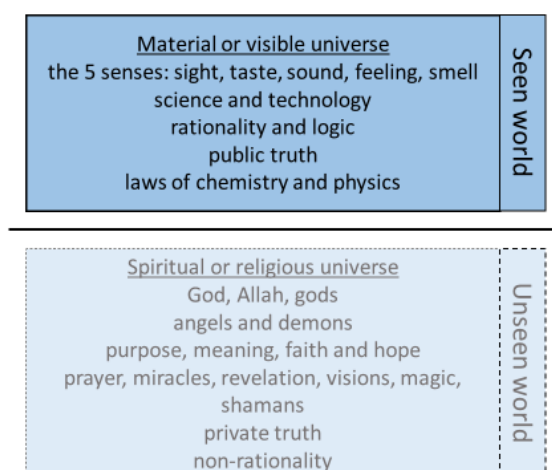


Figure 3: Modern or secular worldview^{96, 97}

In developing the excluded middle concept, and as an alternative to Figure 3, Hiebert and similar writers postulate three categories: the spiritual and the material, similar to Figure 3, plus a central group of agents that mediate a connection between the other groups. It is this middle group of mediators that is termed the ‘excluded middle’ as it is excluded from the modern or secular view, and in practice is often ignored by modern Western Christians. This is illustrated in Figure 4. All categories are assumed to exist, with the exact nature of the middle and upper groups being unclear and these groups being less accessible to humanity. This three-layer structure can typify a worldview of traditional indigenous cultures whose worldviews have not been influenced significantly by Western secularity (Myers, 2011, pp. 210, 247), and these would be typical of many cultures where Western donors and practitioners try to work in development programmes. Here Myers (2011) writes:

⁹⁵ Here *modern* is used in the sense of the sociological concept of *modernity* (see e.g. Hiebert, 2008, pp. 345-346).

⁹⁶ adapted from Bradshaw (1993), Hiebert (2008) and Myers (2011)

⁹⁷ Many sources, e.g. Gardet (2012) and Bridger (2016) consider *Allah* was the common name for God in the Arabic language, predating Islam. Opinions around this are debated so, following Myers (2011) and others, I have listed both *God* and *Allah* to remove any doubt about whether the concept of the spiritual worlds is common across religious boundaries.

the world of high religion is occupied by the great gods that should not be bothered or disturbed. The interrelationship between the seen and unseen worlds is mediated by shamans, sacred books, spirits, and others who have access to both worlds. This is the world of curses, amulets, charms, and other attempts to bargain with or “handle” the unseen world (p. 7).

In perhaps tacit support for Hiebert as quoted above – regarding the way secularity is embedded in the Western Christian church – Myers (2011) considers that, for Western Christians, who might be expected to support a biblical approach, ‘it should be humbling to note that the worldview of the Bible is closer to the worldview of traditional cultures than it is to the modern [material] worldview’ (p. 8).

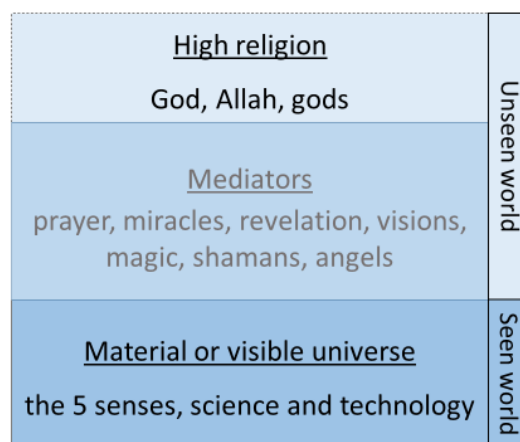


Figure 4: The excluded middle⁹⁸

Myers (p. 9) then presents his version of a biblical worldview, as in Figure 5 . Key features of Figure 5 include that all compartments are of equal weight, implying all are assumed to exist and contribute substantially to life; and the boundaries between the compartments are permeable, implying reasonably easy interaction between them. Similar to Myers’ traditional indigenous cultures, this worldview shows the middle group of mediators being included, not excluded.

These three figures provide a helpful pictorial representation of the religious and secularist worldviews described in the sections above and, as discussed throughout this thesis, these alignments and separations can be expected to have implications for cross-cultural communication in development. Myers (2011) writes of a ‘blind spot. We fail to hear the community’s story about the unseen world, and we fail to have answers that, in their minds, adequately take this world into account’ (p. 8). In addition Figure 4 and Figure 5 show differences between what Myers calls traditional indigenous cultures, that might typify many recipient groups, and a biblical worldview, that will have shaped the views of Western faith-based organisations to a degree. Between all these

⁹⁸ adapted from Bradshaw (1993), Hiebert (2008) and Myers (2011)

parties there would appear to be potential for disconnection at both the cognitive and emotional levels. Box 2 summarises one case where the potential disconnection became a reality

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| God the Father | Unseen world |
| The risen Christ | |
| The saints before us | |
| Angels | |
| Prayer and visions | |
| Sacred space | |
| Signs and wonders | Seen world |
| Holy Spirit with us | |
| Christ in us | |
| The Word of God | |
| Science with a purpose | |

Figure 5 : A biblical worldview⁹⁹

Other writers, for example Harrington (2007), Paras (2014) and Barton (2018) present interesting philosophical and practical perspectives on fuzzy boundaries between the religious and secular, or between faith and knowledge. Critiquing Kant, Weber and Habermas regarding the ‘limits of reason’, Harrington suggests that, if it is accepted, on both philosophical and practical grounds, that ‘the boundary between the secular and the religious [is] fluid, should [we] not also accept the boundary between knowledge and faith as fluid’ (p. 549). From a practical perspective, Paras writes of debates within Christian organisations and in wider Canadian society over boundaries between religious and secular organisations, and points out a high degree of flexibility of religious organisations to mould their working practices to fit the needs of different situations (p. 452). Looking at the rise of scientific influence in the 19th century, Barton argues that historical boundaries between religion and science were ‘multidimensional’ (p. 461), and were as much about scientific professionalism as about faith (p. 16).

Box 2: *The spirit catches you and you fall down* (Fadiman, 2012)

This is a well-known and tragic account of a clash of worldviews when, in 1980, a Hmong family arrived in USA as refugees from Laos. American doctors diagnosed a daughter in the family as having epilepsy, and prescribed medical treatment. To the family, she was indwelt by spirits, and she and they were privileged to have special powers that came with that. They accepted however that she had health needs and they sought help mainly through traditional spiritual ceremonies. The girl’s health deteriorated, and through successive confrontations between the family and medical authorities, made worse by language barriers, she was taken from the family to receive normal Western care. After a particularly bad seizure she was pronounced brain-dead and the authorities returned her to the family to die. The family was left with bitterness over betrayal by the doctors, blaming them for their daughter’s death; and the medical profession continued to accuse the family of being irresponsible. It is a sad story of poor communication across worldview divides. There never was an empathetic accommodation of worldviews, neither side taking time to understand and work with the others’ position.

⁹⁹ after Myers (2011)

2.5 Who are the parties?

One way of looking at the contributing parties would be to adopt a three-party typology of: recipients, donors and practitioners. Recipients would usually present as an organised collective with some form of constitution, even if informal, or perhaps through an agency that would represent them. There is a donor, or donors, and in the case of plural donors they could be expected to operate in harmony with some relationship negotiated between them. The third partner is the practitioner, who is responsible for implementing a project on behalf of the recipients and donor. The practitioner might also be a donor, but often the donor will engage a separate practitioner as its agent, and the practitioner will become the usual face of the donor in dealings with recipients. In addition, there will usually be a myriad of people and organisations who have a stake in the project and will want to be satisfied at least at the start and often throughout the time of implementation. These will include agents of the recipients' government in all its levels, cultural or other organisations including NGOs, and parent bodies or subsidiaries of donors and practitioners.

While that is a valid grouping of participants, and while I will continue to use the terms *recipient*, *donor* and *practitioner*, this thesis uses a variation on that typology. Building on the literature reviewed in sections 2.2 to 2.4, and Figures 3 to 5, it is clear there are often substantial differences between the worldviews of parties in international development. There are recipients, who according to the literature reviewed are likely to see supernatural forces at play. There are FBOs, who are often rooted in the West and have lived with its common secularity, but at the same time have some spiritual affinity with the religiousness of recipients groups. Finally there are secular donors or practitioners. So a new typology could group participants into the three categories of: *recipients*, *secular organisations*, and *faith based organisations* (FBOs). Referring to the initial typology, both secular and faith-based organisations can be donors, or practitioners, or a combination. To a large degree the rest of the thesis explains the reasons for and characteristics of those three new parties.

This three-party typology could be presented pictorially as in Figure 6, and this image will be used throughout the thesis as a basis for discussion. The figure is drawn with overlaps between the circles, as intuitively the parties would be likely to have some common ground. The reality and extent of overlap and the extent to which the parties might be partners is a core research question that will be addressed throughout the thesis, and rounded out in section 8.2.1.

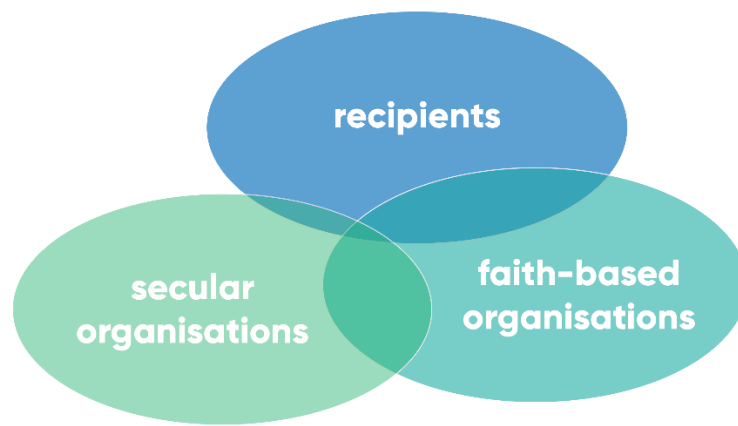


Figure 6: Three-party typology of partners in development

2.6 Post-secularism

This section considers post-secularity as a phenomenon, mainly in the West, airing debates around religion versus secularism; and then section 2.7, looks at applications in international development.

The term *post-secular*, addressing a resurgence of religion in public life, was popularised by Jürgen Habermas (e.g. Harrington, (2007))¹⁰⁰. Habermas's concept was essentially that religion, whose 'proper function' had been seen as 'administering the means of salvation' and 'a private matter' (2008, p. 17), now 'maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularist certainty that religion will disappear worldwide ... is losing ground' (Habermas, 2008, p. 21). Barton (2018) writes of that pre-resurgence era: 'Secularization has been one of the grand narratives widely used in history and sociology to make sense of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'. But she acknowledges 'it is increasingly obvious that religion is not declining in the modern world' (p. 31). Fountain and Petersen (2018) agree, writing 'during the closing decade of the twentieth century the "secularisation thesis" came to be seen as increasingly unconvincing' (p. 408). Similarly Gonzalez (2010)¹⁰¹ comments that rationalism 'reached its apex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'. Habermas (2006), referring to the end of communism in Europe in a movement influenced strongly by churches, recognises a recent revival in religious consciousness: 'Religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto unexpected political importance since the epoch making change of 1989-90' (p. 1). Building on Barton (2018) and the other writers above, Figure 7 shows emerging new eras or worldviews in Western thinking. The dotted lines indicate the eras continue together into the 21st century.

¹⁰⁰ p. 543f

¹⁰¹ p. 237

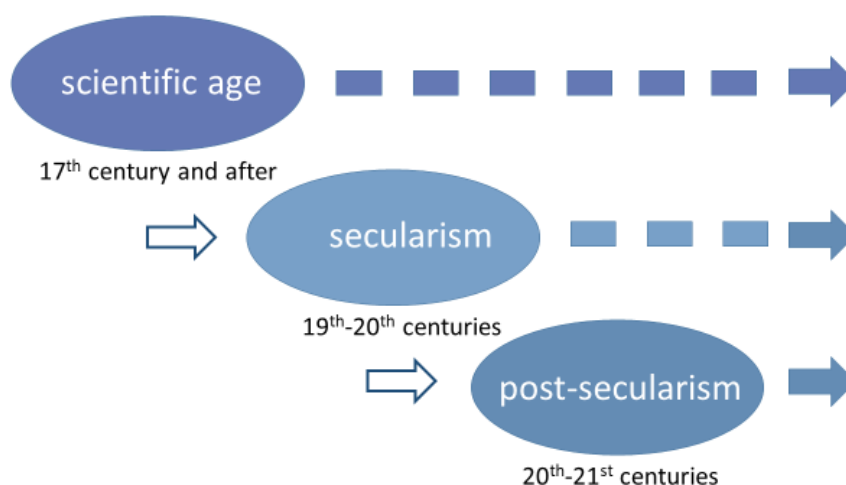


Figure 7: Emerging new eras in Western thinking

In the Habermasian sense, post-secularism is not about society converting to religious belief, but rather it is about acknowledging that religion will continue to exist in society, and it has a legitimate presence in public affairs. Habermas (2008) points out that technically the term 'can only be applied to the affluent societies of Europe or countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where people's religious ties have ... lapsed in the post-World War 2 period' (p. 17), that is to countries that had become largely secular. Brown (2007) endorses Habermas's starting point that secularisation 'seems exclusively limited to greater Europe' including 'Australasia' (pp. 394, 416). In a modification that does not alter Habermas's core story, Harrington (2007) takes the concept to cover Western Europe, the Soviet bloc and Communist China, and suggests the popular 20th century 'European Marxism' was "'particularistic'" rather than mainstream (p. 547). So Habermas (2006) argues that 'the significance of religions used for political ends has ... grown the world over ... [and] the normal [secularised] model for the future of all other cultures suddenly becomes a special-case scenario' (p. 2). He repeats that idea saying 'European development ... [which] was once supposed to serve as a model for the rest of the world, is actually the exception rather than the norm – treading a deviant path' (2008, p. 18). Coffey (2001) endorses that exception idea, writing that instead of seeing American religiosity as exceptional, 'we should be asking whether Europe itself might be exceptional in its secularity' (p. 3). Habermas (2006, p. 2) adds that the resurgence of a public role for religion is recovering the norm of human society, and Harrington (2007) refers to the views of that secular era as 'a previously over-confidently secularist outlook' (p. 547). Brown (2007) says 'religion is resurgent worldwide', partly, or at least in its more fundamentalist forms, with a 'new masculinity' in religion (p. 411). Blair (2008) argues 'you cannot understand the modern world unless you understand the importance of religious faith' (p. 32). As Bosch saw the situation in 1991:

religion can indeed look forward to playing a more vital role in society than was possible when the Enlightenment paradigm reigned supreme, one has to recognize that the tensions will remain and that religion's role in the future will be a diffuse one (p. 354).

An implication is that as New Zealand has been part of 'greater Europe' (Habermas, 2008, pp. 18-19) its secularity has also been an abnormality: if accepted, this aberration could have implications for how we view relationships between development partners.

Regarding timelines and acceptance in the academic or practitioner world of a public role for religion, Lunn (2009) described the 1980 issue of *World Development on Religion and Development* as being at that time a radical departure from existing scholarship on development. The editors and other contributors argued that religion should be seen as 'the moral base of society rather than one of several dimensions comprising society'. So it should provide the framework for development rather than just be used instrumentally. However Lunn considered this idea was not taken up and 'lay inert' until near her time of writing. (p. 946).

However, in addition to Habermas's reference to the fall of communism in Europe, as noted above, other writers give examples of religion being active in the public sphere. In Britain, Coffey (2001) lists numerous campaigns where Christian churches have played a leading role. He stated:

In Britain at least, the language of politics seems to have become thoroughly secularised. However, if we mean that religion becomes a purely private, personal matter, the answer is "No" ... voluntary religious movements that accept differentiation and their own loss of monopoly and control can still have a major impact in the public sphere of civil society (pp. 2-3).

Then globally, Coffey (2001) mentions as examples of 'distinctively modern "public religion"': the American civil rights movement, the pro-life movement, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Polish Solidarity movement. Other authors (e.g. Brown (2007)¹⁰², de Gruchy (2006)¹⁰³, Deneulin and Rakodi (2011)¹⁰⁴, Gonzalez (2010)¹⁰⁵, James, (2011)¹⁰⁶, Lunn (2009)¹⁰⁷; and Steeves (2002)¹⁰⁸) also see the resurgence of religion in recent decades in events such as the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up; the transition to democracy in the Philippines; liberation movements in South America; the advent of sharia law in some Muslim-majority countries and elsewhere; stopping the arms race; the 9/11

¹⁰² pp. 394, 410

¹⁰³ pp. 83, 88

¹⁰⁴ p. 48

¹⁰⁵ p. 471

¹⁰⁶ p. 114

¹⁰⁷ p. 942

¹⁰⁸ p. 529

suicide flights in USA in 2001, where religious extremism forced itself into the public eye; and the Jubilee 2000 campaign where religious organisations united to pressurise politicians globally regarding international debts against less developed countries. Referring to religion in the West, Coffey's (2001) summary is: 'Monopoly has collapsed but influence remains' (p. 3). He goes on to say that 'the loss of political power can be a blessing' as the church has often worked best when 'it was prophetic, [but] not ... privatised.' By 'prophetic' he means speaking out on issues the church sees as important to society, and he emphasises one prophetic function as being 'a voice for the voiceless' (p. 4). Debray (2008) calls a non-religious view of modernity 'an archaism of the industrial age' (p. 33).

Habermas (2008) sees a worldwide religious resurgence as occurring in 'three overlapping phenomena': 'orthodox, or at least conservative, groups within the established religious organizations and churches are on the advance everywhere'; the fastest growing religious movements, whatever their religious stable, and whether they combat the world or withdraw from it, are fundamentalist; and historic 'smouldering conflicts' are 'ignited once coded in religious terms' (pp. 18-19). By 'fundamentalist' he means a 'decentralized form of terrorism' (2008, p. 1), and associates it with authoritarianism and repression of thought, so these phenomena are all confrontationist, or potentially so (2008, pp. 7, 18). This view of religious resurgence is addressed further in section 2.7, and later in fieldwork and discussion. To people who argue against his post-secular thesis, he considers they 'betray an imprecise use of the concepts of "secularization" and "modernization"' (p. 19). He concludes that today 'public consciousness in Europe [and by his associations earlier, 'greater Europe', including New Zealand] can be described in terms of a "post-secular" society to the extent that at present it still has to "adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment"' (2008, p. 19). In addition he sees a 'change in consciousness' of modern societies attributed 'primarily to three phenomena' (p. 20). These phenomena – which are distinct from his 'three overlapping phenomena' mentioned earlier in this paragraph – are: 'the broad perception of those global conflicts that are often presented as hinging on religious strife'; increasing influence of religion 'within national public spheres' such as being sounding boards for values; and the increasing numbers of immigrants who bring different cultures and force a degree of pluralism onto Western society (2008, p. 20). He omits any mention of a resurgence within the mainstream Western populace, which could be argued, for example, from Hay and Hunt (2000) and for New Zealand, in Ward (2013).

Some people do not welcome the return of religion to the public sphere. Habermas (2006) refers to an American journalist who, observing a religiously influenced political event in the USA, wrote an article entitled "The day the Enlightenment went out" (pp. 2-3). Supporting this concern, Corbridge

(2002) wrote about 'the importance of secularism as a coherent ideology for safeguarding the interests of contending religious groups' (p. 200). Brown (2007) writes

a largely secular people like the British are alarmed by this [renaissance], since it represents a major shift in the understanding of religion ... [and] has generated something of a tremor in the normally sedate foundations of British governance: [they have had] religion thrust upon them (p. 393).

He writes further that 'A new world order has been invoked' (p. 2). Debray (2008)¹⁰⁹ wrote that when President Sarkozy of France called for "'a positive secularism that debates, respects and includes, not a secularism that rejects'", he 'scandalized the lay establishment by saying ... that "rejecting a dialogue with religion would be a cultural and intellectual error"' (p. 32). For the USA, Habermas (2006) mentions the 'paralyzing irritation among its secular opponents' of USA's 'religiously active citizens' (p. 2), and lists a number of contested social issues. In an example from Europe, the core constituency of secularism, Guerra (2016) describes a declaration of the European Commission to hold regular dialogues with faith communities in its territory as 'a commitment under stress'. Ager and Ager (2016) write that 'the resurgence of religion can be seen as the major source of challenge to neoliberal hegemony in development thinking' (p. 101). Triandis (2011), discussing interactions between different cultures, expresses an opinion that 'external religions [that is, religions that assume there are supernatural entities] are self-deceptions' (p. 9). Habermas (2008) writes of the Enlightenment as a 'fortress' that people defend with fundamentalist attitudes, and '*secularists*¹¹⁰ fight for a colorblind inclusion of all citizens irrespective of their cultural origin and religious belonging'. These attitudes demand that 'religion must remain an exclusively private matter' (pp. 24-25). These kinds of responses show a society that sees the return of religion to the public discourse as potentially a Kuhn-scale revolution in thinking¹¹¹, touching on 'the foundations of the liberal self-understanding' (2006, p. 3). Habermas (2008) refers to 'a fiery [public] debate' on the subject post 9/11, where people considered that 'In the light of a liberal constitution ... religion must be tolerated, but it cannot lay claim to provide a cultural resource for the self-understanding of any truly modern mind'. (pp. 25-26). Despite the support UNFPA gives to religion in development, as quoted earlier, McGregor et al (2012) consider that UN as an agency has 'difficulty' engaging with 'non-secular organisations' (p. 1138).

Challenging those reactions, Habermas (2006) asks where the balance lies between those who champion 'a secular state held to be neutral' regarding religion, versus those who support 'a *narrow*

¹⁰⁹ This quote is endorsed by Gardels (2008, p. 4)

¹¹⁰ Italics are Habermas's emphasis, as throughout quotes from him

¹¹¹ Kuhn (1996) identified painful paradigm shifts, sea changes in theories or ways of acting, that pepper the history of science.

secularist notion of a pluralist society' (p. 3). He advocates 'complementary learning processes' (pp. 4, 16, 18) between secularists and religious adherents as a way of limiting the misunderstandings, and 'a multi-dimensional concept of reason' (p. 16). He describes modern liberal secularism as, for example, a 'state that no longer depends on religious legitimation' (p. 4), where people consider their decisions 'can be impartially justified in the light of generally accessible reasons' (p. 5), that is, regardless of people's religion or lack of religion, and we could infer he means the state is not governed or influenced by any concept of God (p. 5). He writes that in a secularist state 'Every citizen must know and accept that only secular reasons count ... [in] parliaments, courts, ministries and administrations'; in the legislative process; and in 'formal proceedings within political bodies' (pp. 9-10). Particularly through his 2006 paper, he describes the popular view of *secularity* as equating with *rational, reasoned, logical* and *scientific*, which are assumed associations, and do not differentiate between *irrational* and *non-rational*. This exacerbates the perceived tension between the Enlightenment and religion. As a consequence he repeatedly describes the priority of public support for secularity, writing, for example, of 'the precedence of secular reasons' and, without defining them, the subordination of religious views (pp. 13, 15). Colourfully, he likens some public attitudes to tolerating the continuance of religion as 'conservation of a species in danger of becoming extinct' (p. 15). His counter-argument is that 'the liberal state has an interest in unleashing religious voices' in 'the political public sphere' (p. 11). In doing so he acknowledges but decries that this might impose an 'asymmetrical burden' on religious organisations (pp. 11-18); that 'the liberal standard version is intrinsically self-contradictory if it ... distributes cognitive burdens unequally between secular and religious citizens'; and that there are 'limits of secular reason' (pp. 13-15). He points out issues with accessibility of language, which can be exacerbated by religious writers' unhelpful use of jargon (e.g. pp. 10-17). However Harrington (2007) considers that Habermas gives priority to secularity, writing that 'religion in his thinking must never be allowed to challenge reason's sovereign demarcation of domains' (p. 557). So Harrington considers Habermas is teetering on the brink of his own '*narrow secularist* notion of a pluralist society'. Habermas (2008) (see sections 2.3 and 2.6), had criticised those who wanted religious institutions to 'restrict themselves to their proper function of administering the means of salvation, turn exercising religion into a private matter and in general lose public influence and relevance' (p. 17). Habermas had clearly moved well beyond that view, but Harrington suggests he might be 'opening himself to [religious matters] only in such a guarded, conditional way that it is not really opening them at all' (p. 546). Harrington partly excuses this by also referring to the 'limits of translation' (p. 551), where secular and religious people try to communicate. Without looking at international development, Harrington sees understanding as a difficulty even within the restricted range of European, post-Enlightenment culture, where 'religious language' marginalises discussion.

Other writers support this critique of the supposed revival of religion in a post-secular society. For example Baumgart-Ochse et al. (2017) acknowledge 'Post secular theory adds ... that religion can provide normative frames of justice' – so getting near an ontologically different role. But they write of 'how powerful the secularization paradigm still is in its ability to shape the academic discourse on religion's role in public life', and of 'subordinating religious and indigenous ontologies to the dominance of secularism' (pp. 1070-1071). Briese, in 2016, exemplifies that attitude, writing that 'being a secular nation means our society ... can operate quite well without any specific reference to God or religion'. Regarding the future he says 'I am not bold enough to hold ... [that religion will not disappear] but for the moment something else has happened': that 'something else' including a common perception that religious allegiance or views are 'matters of private interest' (pp. 53-54). Looking at New Zealand, Matheson (2006) echoes the struggle, writing of the reluctance to accept religion as a force of its own. Instead people like to see it 'as a screen for other, more tangible realities with which they are familiar: power struggles, political agendas, psychological proclivities, or whatever'. He also documents popular phrases in New Zealand that portray stereotypes of the resurgent religion, such as "'Moral evangelism" ... "the wild child" ... a "corset" ... and "A cult of ... Kiwi Christs"'. He considers these pejorative phrases exhibit a wish to avoid the phenomenon. He also warns against 'the tendency ... to subsume religious factors under ethnic influences' in colonial times and calls this 'a posthumous muzzling of religion' (pp. 185-187) that fits modern sensibilities: from the word 'posthumous' we could infer a continuing wish that religion was dead.

Wilson (2017) has been highly critical of secularism's assumptions and agendas. She states that secularity assumes 'a single reality exists' and 'secular ontologies retain their claim to universality and continue to position themselves as superior to non-secular ontologies', making secularity the 'normative assumption' (pp. 1077-1078). A foundational problem, Wilson asserts, is that 'secular rational enquiry cannot acknowledge God's existence because accepting the existence of God must, at some point, occur on the basis of faith' (p. 1084). However she argues that even forms of secularism that are protective of religion 'assume that secularism provides the best possibility for neutral and equitable public debate' (pp. 1078, 1081, 1087)¹¹². Disagreeing with that view, she argues that secularism is out of tune with the majority, and in reality:

Secularism is a highly specific, culturally embedded model for managing the relationship between religion and politics that emerged in Euro-American contexts as part of the Enlightenment ... [It] is a distinctive ontology, or theory about what exists ... It constitutes particular practices and ideas along the natural/ supernatural binary (p. 1079).

¹¹² Wilson (2017) concedes that 'secularism has enabled ... many important achievements' (p. 1080). She does not detail what these achievements are, nor whether they might be achievements of science and reason, which might be attributed to both religious and secular parties.

Reinforcing Barton's (2018) view, quoted earlier, Coffey (2001) puts this discomfort into context, writing: 'This secularisation myth [that modern science etc. will usher in the decline of religion] has functioned as a "master narrative", shaping the way we look at the world' (p. 1).

Habermas (2008) concludes: 'the democratic state must not pre-emptively reduce the polyphonic complexity of the diverse public voices ... What puts pressure on secularism, then, is the expectation ... [of meeting] their religious fellow citizens as equals' (p. 29). But, to agree with Harrington, one could query whether Habermas's emphasis might create difficulties for him in engaging effectively, himself, with religious people. Harrington (2007) argues that, in advocating 'methodological atheism', Habermas is taking a position that is unrealistic and, by inserting presuppositions, limits the scope of discussion with religious counterparts. He explains that by 'methodological atheism' Habermas means that 'in their research, social scientists should make no assumption that God exists', and the appeal of this approach is to objectivity in research. I suggest 'methodological agnosticism' might better represent Habermas's own description, and might foster constructive engagement with religious counterparts by allowing the possibility that God could exist and be involved. But, that aside, Harrington argues that this approach is suspending 'the idea of the appeal and attraction of investigating religion for its content of truth' (pp. 549-550). Harrington implies that this treatment of religion is seeking the highest common factor in consultation, retreating from the risks associated with open dialogue, and is limiting authentic engagement.

To turn again to New Zealand and discover where its culture fits with global trends, Matheson (2006), states the general assertion of secularity in New Zealand (see section 2.3) relates 'to a strong preference for the separation of church and state ... [or] to New Zealand's legal system ... [or] to general attitudes or mentalities'. In contrast to Habermas, or at least in a nuanced qualification, he considers both secularisation ('the process') and secularism ('the philosophical framework') 'are perfectly compatible with a respect for religious perspectives' and that 'the ideology of secularism has never been particularly entrenched here' (pp. 178-179)¹¹³. Matheson considers attitudes to church and state having a dialogue are being influenced by globalisation and increasing pluralism, so 'Culturally we stand on a quite new shore' (p. 184). He asks whether the word 'sacred' regarding public cultural practices ... reflects 'a genuine hunger for the sacred ... [or] a fascination with the supernatural, the "weird" ... the transcendent'. At the least he states that 'the Christendom model has broken down', in the sense of any religious control over the state. He concludes that 'Hardly anyone believes ... that secularism is about to sweep religion and religious attitudes away ... as "Religious resurgence ... is as much a feature of modern societies as is religious decline:"'. He

¹¹³ As evidence Matheson (2006) describes what he sees as the easy acceptance of, for example, Māori religiously-based rituals such as Matariki and tapu lifting; what he calls 'a genuine hunger for the sacred ... a fascination with the supernatural' including acceptance of theological motifs in various New Zealand literary or artistic works; and 'new forms which [spirituality] is taking at present' (pp. 180-182).

considers 'we can no longer operate with a simplistic conflict scenario between church and state', and 'faith in the march of technology and rationality ... has equally vanished' (pp. 180-183). He refers also to 'the myth of New Zealand as a secular society' [p. 188], and to modern examples of effective political action from New Zealand church groups¹¹⁴. He considers 'The waning of church institutions ... was accompanied by a series of effective Christian interventions which tapped into our broad public concern about our future national identity'. So, endorsing Griffiths' 'much confusion', Matheson sees our current cultural attitudes as being like 'the grinding together of the secular and religious [tectonic] plates'. He suggests 'we may be entering a "time for re-enchantment"' (pp. 188-191), a phrase that evokes a number of possible images and expresses probably a sentiment of spirit, rather than of literal mysticism.

In an incident involving the Human Rights Commission (HRC), Griffiths (2011) also addresses the evolving understanding of the place of religion in New Zealand culture. According to Griffiths, in 2010 a draft Commission document about the freedom of religion in New Zealand included the brief words "'Matters of religion and belief are deemed to be a matter for the private, rather than the public, sphere'". After public consultation, including protest from the Catholic Church, the Commission argued that it did not intend the plain meaning of that sentence (p. 497). However at best it was unthinking, and it is tempting to infer that it did indicate the mind-set of the author/s in the Commission at that time. The revised Commission's website statement¹¹⁵ now promotes: 'positive relationships between government and faith communities. It offers a framework within which religious issues can be discussed both by faith communities themselves and within the wider New Zealand community'. In more detail, the revised 2010 HRC document, *Human rights in New Zealand – Ngā tika tangata O Aotearoa*, includes:

Like other groups in society, those based on religious or ethical belief have the right to publicly influence the political process and societal norms in light of their values, within the bounds of the law ... Religion and belief continue to impact on and form part of public and political discussion (p. 145).

In an illuminating comment on 'Trends', the Commission says:

Religion and belief continue to impact on and form part of public and political discussion.

This is due to a range of factors, including:

¹¹⁴ Paralleling global incidents, Matheson (2006, p. 190) notes recent religious influence in New Zealand public policy as including pressure in the 1980s and 1990s over aspects of the ultra free-market policies of 'Rogernomics', and the 1997 Hikoi of Hope, sponsored by the Anglican church.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.hrc.co.nz/your-rights/race-relations-and-diversity/religion/our-work/>, retrieved 9 May 2018.

- the emergence of a more religiously diverse New Zealand, with an increased presence of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and other religious communities whose religious practice sometimes challenges current public policies
- the shift away from mainstream Christianity and the rise of newer forms of Christianity
- the rise in those reporting having no religion
- the growing interface between science, its actual and potential discoveries and traditions of belief, especially in regard to ethical dilemmas
- the emergence of issues related to accommodation and dissent in pluralist societies, including internal religious debates, questions around cultural diversity, respect for difference and human rights
- the growing acknowledgement of the contribution that religious communities make to the social capital of a nation, through activities such as volunteering.

The practice of religion is sometimes seen as limiting individual freedoms. At times, it has focussed on issues of individual rights relating to gender or sexual orientation, or the discrimination against individual members of religious groups by members of differing belief systems. Many religious groups, however, have also played a positive role in civil society. They have been a source of support for human rights initiatives, education in constructive values of society, and the championing of those vulnerable groups and individuals who experience discrimination (pp. 145-146).

From the word 'however' we could infer a bias by the Commission, with religious contributions to debates on gender, sexuality and inter-faith discrimination being seen to have been negative. But regardless, this document is a clear statement of religion now having a legitimate place in public life in New Zealand, and is a significant change from the contested meaning of the Commission's earlier draft.

However, while being informative as an official national background, these Commission documents do not address the place of religion in practice in the international development sector, and that is the subject of section 2.7.

2.7 Post-secularism and development

Taking the discussion of post-secularism in the West, as presented above, this section extends the concepts to consider how Western secularity connects with the dominantly religious paradigm of the less developed world and with FBOs: a world and a sector that have never been secular.

Henry (2013) observed 'five overlapping ways in which faith is in creative tension with the conventional development paradigm'. In summary, these are:

- convictions and values versus goals and objectives
- long and expansive versus time limited
- vocation versus professionalisation
- prophetic stance versus collaboration with other stakeholders
- 'other worldly' versus demands and challenges of this life.

So to her 'a faith based framework is more compatible with conceptions of social movements rather than development paradigms' (pp. 30-32). It is worth noting that Henry's 'conventional paradigm' might be considered an over-simplified or outdated view.

The post-secularism concept extends to relationships in international development

In 1980 the journal *World Development* devoted a whole issue to the subject of religion, and in 1991 Bosch argued : 'A post-Enlightenment self-critical Christian stance may ... be ... the only vehicle that can save us from self-deception and free us from dependence on utopian dreams' (p. 361). However the main body of academic literature on religion's involvement in development starts around the year 2000. A major study, entitled *Voices of the poor*, was led by the World Bank from 1998 to 2002, arising out of a dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the president of the World Bank. Its centrepiece was a survey of opinions of 60,000 people in the less developed world¹¹⁶. This study 'evolved into the World Faiths Development Dialogue' (WFDD)¹¹⁷ (Heist & Cnaan, 2016, p. 6), a continuing forum that brings major world faiths together to explore the role of religion in shaping development agendas (p. 6). Soon after this, within the USA, Heist and Cnaan note a 'Faith-Based Initiative' of the Bush administration in the early 2000s (p. 1). Another international initiative resulted in a partnership between United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and religious communities in general, and with the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA) in India ((UNICEF, 2012), (Aziz, 2017), (UNICEF, 2013)). Also around this time, Clarke (2007) reflected: 'the "faith and development" interface ... [is] a controversial and challenging new theme in development policy and discourse', and: 'This acknowledgment of faith and associated organisations in the lives of the poor [through the World Bank *Voices of the poor* study] ... signalled a significant shift in thinking' so that 'Since 1997 ... DFID¹¹⁸ policy on engagement with FBOs has begun to change' to recognise the 'global "resurgence" of religion'. At that time (2007) he considered DFID's steps had remained (p86) 'tentative', with it having 'a number of conceptual and programmatic obstacles' including 'the

¹¹⁶ From 1999 to 2002, under the general title *Voices of the poor*, the study produced three main reports, with Narayan as lead author of all three. The three subtitles were: *Can anyone hear us?*, *Crying out for change*, and *From many lands*.

¹¹⁷ 'WFDD is a not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of religion and global development'. Its vision is 'to bring voices and experience from poor communities more forcefully into development thinking at all levels, by facilitating a more active participation by faith communities in the strategic reflection processes on which development programs are based' (WFDD, n.d.). See also Carey (2008) for further details of the formation of WFDD.

¹¹⁸ DFID is the UK government's Department for International Development

absence of a coherent corporate position ... on faith and development', and that DFID was seeking 'a secular and technocratic vision of development, focusing on the material dimensions of poverty at the expense of its cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions'. So, in Clarke's analysis changes within DFID were 'ad hoc'. One problem, he considered, was an 'uneasy' relationship between secular donors and FBOs where 'DFID fears that funding will be used for proselytising activities' (pp. 78-90).

Initially, at least, DFID's explorations were active, as it funded a further major study, entitled *Religions and development* (RaD), running from 2006 to 2011. This was administered through the University of Birmingham, and it produced some 100 working papers and reports and a few refereed journal articles. The *Development in Practice* journal devoted its Vol 22, July-August 2012 edition to the subject of religion in development, including nine papers from the RaD programme. In 2011, around the time that study concluded, DFID formed a Faith Partnership Principles Working Group, which led to publishing in 2012 of DFID's *Faith partnership principles*. Among other points this document advocated 'building a common understanding of faith and development', to 'identify and discuss areas of difference', to 'challenge each others' values and beliefs', and to have 'open and frank debate' (pp. 6-9) between the parties. This approach seemed genuinely collaborative and was a step ahead of the instrumental role that many FBOs complain of. Later in this section Duff et al. (2016) provide an update on DFID's performance in adopting these principles¹¹⁹.

Another on-going group study is coming out of the USA's Eastern University, under the title *On knowing humanity* (e.g. (Merz & Merz, 2015)). Outputs from some of these programmes and publications have been summarised usefully in Myers (2011, p. 31f) and Thompson (2012, pp. 7-10).

From those research programmes and other individual or smaller-scale studies, a large amount of material has emerged in favour of collaborating over religion and integrating religious perspectives when working in the development sector¹²⁰. Most of the arguments are around the functional theme of being able to connect with recipient partners and mobilise the energies that collaboration brings. However Lunn (2009) goes further, considering 'the path forward for effective development lies in integrating the sacred and the secular and dismantling the pervasive dualisms ... [We need] a reconciliation between reformed religion and transformed secular enlightenment'. It is significant to Lunn that both the religion and secularity that could seek to reconcile would need to be reformed. She argues that, just as secularity was an aberration within Western countries, there is also a philosophical argument in international development that 'the secular development project has

¹¹⁹ DFID's (2012, pp. 4-5) *Faith partnership principles* provides seven short notes of effective change through the work of FBOs. These notes do not explore the extent to which religious faith was a distinctive contributor to the outcomes.

¹²⁰ See, e.g. Ager and Ager (2016, pp. 101-102), Bradley (2013, p. 23), Feener and Fountain (2018), Fountain and Petersen (2018), Lunn (2009, pp. 946-948), Lynch and Schwarz (2016, pp. 47-48), McGregor et al. (2012, p. 1130), Paras (2014, pp. 448-453), and Wilson (2017, pp. 1077-1087).

failed', and that the 'modern dualism which separated the material and spiritual realms' was a temporary 'interruption' in the main stream of development discourse (pp. 946-947). Sidibe (2016) argues in favour of the 'potential synergy' between the SDGs and FBOs, 'especially in delivering holistic health services'. He also expresses a caution in that he agrees the place of religion is 'a mine-field ... [potentially] both extremely positive and profoundly negative', including regarding a concern globally over the use of government funds for proselytising (p. 3). In Cochrane's (2016) opinion the discussion would progress if we discard the expression 'religion *and* development', as that implies a 'disjunction'. Rather we should talk of

"religion *in* development", recognizing that for all serious actors [including secular parties] the priority of human dignity stands, and that the critical issue is what helps develop, enhance, and sustain the capacities and the capabilities that are the mark of what it means to be(come) human (p. 92).

As noted above, in this post-2000 research, the issue of effectiveness of religiously-framed development is addressed by some writers but, apart from the point of facilitating connection with people, this is outside the scope of this thesis. Arguments about the truth of underlying religious or non-religious beliefs are not common in the academic literature and these are also outside the scope of this thesis.

From the claims in the literature noted above I consider four arguments are most relevant to my research interest as they could be expected to affect relationships between the participants. Firstly, religion is a core source of values for about 90% of people in the less-developed world and, as in Table 1, globally this percentage might be increasing. Secondly, 'faith is an integral factor in the lives of the poor' (Lunn, 2009, p. 942), including that 'religious leaders and institutions are often the most trusted institutions in developing countries' (DFID, 2012, p. 3) and are the most effective agents to bring about change. Thirdly, there is a view that 'To engage with religion requires a certain level of 'religious literacy' on the part of development actors' (UNFPA, 2014, p. 5). And fourthly it is considered by many that FBOs are a major supplier of social welfare in the less-developed world: some argue they are the main supplier. These claims are examined or developed further in the next chapter and, later, in the fieldwork for this research.

Compared with the concept of post-secularism in the West at large, where counter arguments are still expressed by some writers, there seems to be, through the last decade or two, a void in anti-post-secularism literature in the development sector. It is 20 years since Sen (1999) (see earlier in this chapter) wrote that to all practical purposes it is our human responsibility to deal with humanity's needs without any reference to outside deities (p. 282). At about that time Tyndale (2000) wrote of 'a yawning chasm' and an 'apparent abyss' between secular and faith-based

organisations (pp. 9-10): those terms would not fit the literature of today's development sector. It would appear that the religiosity of the less-developed world is so endemic that it is now plain that the partners need to engage about religion. If counter-arguments do exist they have been articulated more by academic silence and practical inaction, than by active expression.

The academic literature contains a variety of views on whether religion has become accepted as an important topic in development studies and practice. In 2009 Lunn concluded that secularisation was a phase in the evolution of development theory, although it 'still hold[s] sway today in some quarters' (p. 939), and that development agencies have 'started to realise' the value of religious organisations and have 'begun to engage' (p. 942). Lynch and Schwarz (2016) write: 'changes in development thinking have made the subject of religion no longer avoidable' (p. 48), and Thompson (2012) made a similar comment (p. 9). Baumgart-Ochse et al (2017) consider 'the literature on development or environmental politics has recently rediscovered religion' but it still plays an 'ambiguous role'; also that a 'modernist linear view of progress' has been 'discredited' (pp. 1070-1071). Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) refer to the current 'neglect of religion in development studies'. They add 'One difficulty or challenge however remains ... it is, as yet, by no means clear how the transcendent and sacred dimensions can be reflected in development studies' (p. 52), and they acknowledge there are 'complex and evolving relationships between religious values and organizations and the public sphere' (p. 50). Heist and Cnaan (2016) note an argument that 'the study of international development in its historical and anthropological context is inseparable from the study of religion' (p. 2). Ager and Ager (2016) express conflicting opinions, writing: 'global development continues to be peculiarly wedded to a modernist, secular frame', but they also write about 'the abandonment of the secularization thesis' and asked whether 'the dawning of a post-secular age [is] ... an opportunity to recognise the strengths of diversity and the value of religion in shaping visions of non-consumption-based development' (p. 101). They consider there is a gap between theory and practice, between academics and workers, and also they consider the more general demise of secularisation in society at large is not being played out in the development sector. They argue that: The 'secularization thesis is generally acknowledged to be firmly "de-bunked" ... Developmentalists, however, generally continue to operate as if the tenets of secularism were sacrosanct principles'. They say that although religion has, in 2016, become 'mainstream', there is at least 'significant ambiguity' regarding the 'increasing plurality' (pp. 101-102). Earlier, in 2002, Melkote wrote: 'The modernization paradigm was further criticized for its negative view of culture, especially religious culture, for its patriarchal biases ...', and 'positivist science has claimed to be the final arbiter of truth' (pp. 422-423). Rakodi (2012b) writes 'It is now commonly accepted that the apparent "resurgence of religion" was no such thing' (p. 622).

Returning to look directly at institutional attitudes, UN's Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development (UNIATF) (2016) documents extensive dialogues between, on the one hand, UN and its constituent bodies and, on the other hand, religious organisations and FBOs. Some of these discussions started as early as the 1970s (p. 3). They have increased in momentum since the early 2000s, in response to recognition of the extensive influence of religion and FBOs in development, and the potential for religious terrorism. The parties have sought to achieve understanding of underlying beliefs and their impacts on development programmes and goals, and also to work together to achieve common objectives. Participants in these searches have come from a wide range of religious organisations and have included people with grass-roots connections, who could be expected to have the potential to translate the collaborative findings into field actions.

In addition to DFID and UN as above, other country practices are informative. In one country-specific study, Oyhus (2016) traces the history of mention of religion in official development assistance (ODA) in Norway¹²¹. Up to his time of writing, in 2016, he concludes that there has been 'an almost complete silence' (pp. 73-80). Oyhus considers this avoidance of religion is an anomaly, given the philosophies of many leading political figures in Norway and he attributes that behaviour, in part at least, to Norway's anxiety to maintain trust with its international alliances.

A similar comment could be made about Canada, where Vander Zaag (2013a), despite writing of 'an increasingly post-secular world' (p. 322), goes on to say

it does not appear that CIDA¹²² has been willing to engage [FBOs] in ways that actively engage their faith-based identity ... [CIDA's funding] is quite instrumental, and ... [each party] is quite wary of the other, ... it seems unlikely that any ... rapid changes to [Canada's] secular consensus will occur in the near future (p. 339).

Paras (2014), after describing the debates that take place within FBOs over their missionary versus development agendas, observes helpfully:

In some respects, the debates within Christian organisations ... are reflective of discussions in the broader Canadian society about the relationship of religion to politics, and the role of religion in public policy ... [There has been] a long history of negotiation in Canada about the appropriate boundaries between the sacred and the secular ... [and] Christian organisations are active participants in setting these boundaries ... evidence ... would suggest that the influence of faith-based development actors remains as important as ever, and ... my findings

¹²¹ ODA is Official Development Assistance. That is defined, in part, as aid that is 'provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies' (OECD, n.d.)

¹²² CIDA is the Canadian International Development Agency

suggest that [an] effective strategy would be to investigate exactly how faith-based actors are shaping debates about development, and contributing to the way that Canadians understand the role of religion in their lives at home and abroad. Perhaps the success of Christian organisations in Canada over the past decade ... is an indication of the remarkable capacity of these organisations to adapt to an ever-changing world (p. 452).

As a potentially more integrated example, Ager and Ager (2016) report that

the German Federal Ministry of Development and Cooperation ... has now established engagement with religious actors as a core pillar of its development strategy. ... they have established the Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development to facilitate “formalized exchange between donor nations, international organizations and religious actors to develop new forms of cooperation” (p. 104).

Looking at the USA, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2016), in an article announcing a revision of its rules around FBOs in aid and development, states :

[FBOs] may not use financial assistance from USAID ... to support explicitly religious activities ... such as worship, prayer meetings, religious instruction and proselytization. These activities must be separated either in time or location from USAID-funded programs ... [FBOs] may continue to ... engage in explicitly religious activities, provided they are separated in time or location from their USAID-funded activities.

So by allowing religious activities, including proselytising, to occur alongside although separate from non-religious components of aid, USAID’s rule seems potentially more accommodating than some other government funding organisations.

In New Zealand, in the era of the KOHA system¹²³, NZAID (2008) addressed the question: ‘When [in international development that is funded by government] is it appropriate to have religious activities such as prayer?’ (p. 24). In a curious mix it considered prayers that met the guidelines would be

lead by all community members and include different faith beliefs and include times of silence. All community members know they are able to participate in a way which is meaningful for them. ... It is important that local practices be understood and respected and also that care is taken to be aware of diversity within a community. ... It is important that you

¹²³ At the time Chandpur TCDC started, *Koha*, Māori for gift, or contribution, especially one maintaining social relationships (retrieved from <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?&keywords=koha>, 13 November, 2018) was used as an acronym for the expression Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao, or Partnerships in International Development, the New Zealand government’s international aid and development fund up to 2010 (e.g. Challies, McGregor and Sentes (2011), p17).

and your partner can talk openly with communities about how religious and cultural practices are part of the development practice.

This document referred to religion in its ritual and cultural senses, rather than the ontological sense that I use in this thesis.

As part of its Code of Conduct New Zealand's Council for International Development (CID)¹²⁴ (2017), which includes many of New Zealand's FBOs, promises that affiliated organisations will not use funds intended for development 'to promote a particular religious adherence' (p. 11). Also, in images used in publications, CID asks its affiliates to portray recipient groups, including their religion, with 'respect', which it associates with dignity. Beyond that, it is silent on religion and spirituality.

Concluding on the topic of collaboration between secular and faith-based organisations, Duff et al. (2016) wrote an article that is significant in that three of the four authors have leadership roles in major development agencies: DFID, UN and World Bank. The article traces the ebb and flow, from before 2000 to 2015, of engagement between some religious and government or multilateral agencies. It presents compelling stories of intentions for closer collaboration with religious organisations, and of some achievements, including a 'Millennium Peace Summit' in 2000 which saw 'an unprecedented show of solidarity and commitment by religious and development leaders to shared human development objectives' (p. 96). However they acknowledge they are addressing 'high level' dialogues, and the collaborative ethos has neither fully penetrated their organisations, nor been carried through to consistent ground-level practice. Rather, there is evidence that even the high-level adoption has depended on the priorities of individual CEOs¹²⁵. So the paper is peppered with ambivalent expressions like 'signs of more sophisticated collaboration', 'decades of ... slowly building mutual understanding and trust', 'promise', and 'emerging bilateral collaboration' (pp. 95-98). Even these cautious expressions need to be read alongside the acknowledgement of the fluctuating nature of the relationships. Issues raised include: concerns that both sides are being used as instruments for the agendas of the other¹²⁶; questions about how to represent diverse religious communities; competition for diminishing resources for international development; constraints of political nervousness in donor countries regarding engagement with religious organisations; a need for greater religious literacy and competency in secular development organisations; a need for improved evidence of the value added by religious-secular collaboration; and a need for early

¹²⁴ 'The Council for International Development (CID) is the national umbrella agency of international development organisations based in Aotearoa New Zealand', retrieved 181231 from <https://www.cid.org.nz/>

¹²⁵ See e.g. Fountain and Petersen (2018, p. 409) re the World Bank

¹²⁶ See also Wilson (2017) who says: 'Despite an increased interest in and willingness to engage with religious actors across the humanitarian sector in recent years, this engagement has primarily focused on the "added value" that religious actors bring to pre-existing, predominantly secular and (Western) state-driven humanitarian aid and development programmes' (p. 1087).

involvement of FBOs in shaping the direction of development plans (pp. 96-99). They leave unanswered the question in their own title: 'High-level collaboration between the public sector and religious and faith-based organizations: Fad or trend?'

It is clear from all the discussion above that policies of governments and secular donors are sporadic in the way they respond to a potentially post-secular world. Ager and Ager (2016) consider academia is still ahead of practice in moving on from secularisation (p. 102). Lunn, writing in 2009, was in a minority when she claimed that 'practice has engaged with religion more than theory or academia' (p. 942).

In addition to these equivocal comments on adoption of post-secularity in the development sector, I note that most of the discussion is about the two-party relationship between secular and faith-based organisations in donor countries. In contrast my interest includes interactions with the crucial third party, the recipients, as at least equally important, and that is the subject of the next subsection. That creates a triangle of relationships.

In summary of this subsection, the value and practice of addressing religion in development has been argued extensively in academic literature and in reports since 2000.

Secularism is out of step with the less developed world

The reasons promoted for engaging with religion in development are similar to reasons for engaging with religion in the West, that is that religion helps shape the thinking of many people in the community, and appears to be thriving. A need for working with religion in development was argued in an early and colourful article by Goulet (1980). He hoped that 'development experts' – 'one-eyed giants' who used an anti-religious 'reductionist approach ... as if man could live by bread alone', and were 'lacking wisdom' – would 'enrich their own diagnoses and prescriptions for action' by engaging with 'religious value systems'. To him, these systems enhance 'the creativity, beauty or triumphs of which human beings are capable' (pp. 481, 488). More prosaically Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) write that 'religion deeply influences people's construction of meanings about the world ... [and] believers' interpretations of social, economic, and political reality' (p. 46), and Heist and Cnaan (2016) add discussion on how a religious approach can address 'root causes' (p. 6). Clarke and Jennings (2008) consider 'the language of faith, the religious idiom, frequently better reflects the cultural norms in which the poor and marginalised operate'. So they report further that 'people on the ground often prefer faith-based providers to secular ones, and if possible those of a faith that locals can relate to' (p. 16): a sentiment that Bradley (2013, p. 11) affirms. Fountain (2015, p. 83) states that separating religion from development 'may be considerably more complex than is often imagined'. But he goes further, arguing religion and religious institutions are so embedded in most cultures that 'strengthening local capacities may well require the enhancement of "religious" institutions' (p. 83),

as the local form of civil society. His suggestion of *enhancing* religious institutions as a tool for development stretches the idea of recognition to a new level. As Lynch and Schwarz, (2016) say, in working with people from other cultures ‘faith-based groups can provide a more intuitive understanding of and attention to spiritual as well as material needs’. By way of contrast ‘aid practices ... sometimes attempt to excise “the religious.” This represents a form of secular bias that can result in difficult relationships with recipients’ (p. 639). Bosch (1991) considered development’s ‘obsession with “rationality” ... blinded it to the integral powers of culture and humanhood in the Third World’, which were saturated with religion (p. 357). From an Islamic perspective Ferris (2005) quotes one source as saying ““considering religion is the guarantor of morals, charity, good behaviour and virtue [...] Islamists cannot conceive of self-respecting humanitarian NGOs as anything other than religiously inspired”” (p. 324)¹²⁷. Christian, in World Vision (2016), says World Vision’s ‘faith in Christ ... enables us to consider the entirety of a community’s values and beliefs’ (p. 45). Samovar et al. (2007/2013) state:

Some Africans say, “There is no distinction between religion and the rest of life. All of life is religious”. Although that might be an overstatement, it is true that as a worldview, religion is an important part of life for billions of people ... At the core of this worldview is a “belief in the existence of a reality greater than humans” (p. 123).

Overall Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) argue that religion, among other forces, has a ‘normative influence’ (p. 49) in society so, in development, we could consider it to be more than just an instrument to carry out the development plans of donors.

Above I noted new 2016 USAID rules that seemed more accommodating of religion than most governmental organisations. However Schwarz (2018), addressing one religious practice – prayer – still finds those rules to be out of touch with the ethos of both recipients and FBOs. In her view, the rules which would prohibit prayer at a project meeting continue to misunderstand the meanings and roles of prayer in development. Instead they maintain an historic secular attitude that majors on ‘both the dangers and in consequence’ of such religious activities (pp. 30-32, 49-50). So there is a clear need for development organisations to at least be literate in the religions of their counterparts.

In summary of this subsection, in the less-developed world, even more than in the West, people coming with secular assumptions will find it difficult to establish trusting relationships with recipient partners.

¹²⁷ Fountain (2015) provides a brief exposé of Islam’s struggles to ‘de-link’ religion, politics, economics and morality (p. 89).

A secularist agenda can be considered an injustice

In addition to arguments around post-secularity in the West, there is a particular fundamental argument in the development sector that secularism is, as Wilson (2017) puts it, an 'ontological injustice'. By this she means that an assumption of secularity leads to 'the exclusion of views of alternative worlds', and 'infringes on the capacity of ... individuals and communities to fully experience the human' (pp. 1076-1090). As quoted earlier (section 2.3) Ager and Ager (2016) agree, asserting there is a 'blindness of secularism to its presumptions' and 'the particularity of its origins', and this leads, in development, to the 'privatization, marginalization, and instrumentalization of religion'. In doing so it 'disempowers the voices ... of the southern actors who have the greatest stake in the sustainable development enterprise' (pp. 102-103). Mitchell (2017) calls it 'a shocking conceit ... [not] engaging with the primary source of meaning of the vast majority of communities in developing countries' (p. xxii), and Ager and Ager (2016) write that it 'raises questions regarding the voices of those shaping this discourse', claiming those voices 'are disproportionately drawn from the minority reporting no religious affiliation' (p103). As a result, McGregor (2006) writes of the 'power and seduction of development', and says development in general is seen as 'a global hegemonic project designed and managed by Western powers to rearrange the world in ways that suit their interests' (pp. 165, 169, 179).

Wilson (2017) calls for 'alternatives to secular ontologies as ways of defining, understanding, and responding to the world', to remove 'the inequalities and power imbalances' that currently exist (p. 1090). She goes on to describe three main practices that people use for handling the dichotomy. The first is to ignore religion. The other two adopt the "Two faces of faith approach" (p. 1080), that is, that religion has made a comeback and is either positive, supporting agendas such as human rights; or negative, leading to oppression and terrorism. Cochrane (2016) agrees with this dichotomous potential (p. 90). UNFPA (2014) states 'Secular development actors are cautioned against either ignoring the role of religion (in which case the development agenda loses a valuable interlocutor), or over-simplifying the complexities and ambiguities often found in such domains, particularly around contentious rights-related issues' (p. v). This UNFPA document supports religion for its instrumental potential, but Wilson (2017) argues that all of these approaches still give priority to secularity and subordinate religion. As Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) argue, secularism 'permeates their discourses, and is the dominant, if not often the only, analytical grid used to understand the relationships between religion and development' (p. 49). The same comment applies (Wilson, 2017) to funding agencies that engage FBOs as instruments to carry out the funders' own agendas and do not allow the practitioners to add their own flavours to the work (p. 1086). Lunn (2009) takes a similar line, writing 'The systematic omission or devaluing of religion ... is a form of cultural imperialism which could result in the reduced effectiveness of development research and potentially damaging interventions'. The influence is such that Lunn considers official statements from even

some FBOs ‘were carefully worded to convey the fact that the topic of spirituality [i.e. religion] was avoided in their programmes’ (pp. 940-941). Ager and Ager (2016), again, consider this governance of the debate by secularity was still in force at their time of writing and ‘is a hegemonic act’ by nations ‘who seek to conform the global diversity of worldviews to a secular frame amenable to their continuing economic dominance and, increasingly pertinent, security’. They also argue that, now ‘the complex realities of the 21st century raise the question of whether secularism is a feasible strategy to continue to manage plurality’. They argue that ‘In particular, in its current form, secularism serves to marginalize institutions crucial to the goal of sustainable development’ (pp. 102-104). It is neither willing to engage as an equal with religious partners, nor to ‘hand over the stick’¹²⁸ to recipient groups.

But, despite arguing for religion being an integral component of development, many of the writers quoted above acknowledge there are complexities, both philosophically and practically. Some practical arguments are addressed further in chapter 3, about *Faith based organisations*.

Philosophical arguments are principally around the nature of poverty [see also sections 2.2 and 2.3 of this chapter], and compartmentalising versus integrating elements of humanity (e.g. Lynch and Schwarz (2016)¹²⁹, Paras (2014)¹³⁰); limits of secularism as a development framework (for example Coffey, (2001)¹³¹); and a need for a faith of some sort¹³² (e.g. Paras, (2014)¹³³, Wilson, (2017)¹³⁴).

There are also arguments about the limits or successes of development without a good understanding of the worldviews between the partners in development (e.g. Wilson, (2017)¹³⁵).

Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) consider that ‘development should be based on people’s values, and not external to them’, so religion should be ‘fully integrated into development thinking’¹³⁶. These authors also raise and leave hanging a question over ‘Whether the potential for harnessing religious values and beliefs or collaborating between secular and religious organizations outweighs the pitfalls’ (pp. 48, 52). Chong (2013) decries the ‘reductionist perspective’ [of the] “economic man” theory (pp. 28-29). All these contentions are acknowledged and put to one side until chapter 8.

¹²⁸ This expression comes from Chambers (1994b, p. 1254) and is explained in section 3.3.

¹²⁹ p. 48

¹³⁰ p. 448

¹³¹ p. 4

¹³² In a comment that could be applied regardless of what one chooses to believe, Tallon, former Professor of Physics at Victoria University of Wellington, stated (<https://vimeo.com/67883572>): ‘faith is trusting what I have reason to believe’ (retrieved June 2018).

¹³³ pp. 448, 453. Paras’s *faith* is similar to my term *worldview*

¹³⁴ p. 1084

¹³⁵ p. 1080

¹³⁶ In integrating with people’s values they support Sen’s capabilities approach. However they argue that integration will require integrating religion into development thinking, and there they disagree with Sen.

In summary of this subsection, one argument against a secularist agenda in development is that it seeks to partially disempower recipients: the opposite of what development should be aiming to achieve.

Collaboration in practice

I will conclude this section on post-secularism and development with a brief introduction to some practical points about collaboration, and these will be developed further in chapter 8.

In its *Faith partnership principles*, DFID (2012) advocates a broad based “community of learning” ... [with] open and frank debate ... [in] a representative and balanced forum’ (p. 9). It called for country-specific case studies including examples of good practice, and for study on the ‘added value and effectiveness’ of faith approaches.

Clarke (2007) considers FBOs have a greater ease in connecting with recipients, writing of the affinity between FBOs and recipients, how ‘faith communities and FBOs ... [use] the idioms of spiritual belief’ (p. 89). He reports that some donors have stated they want to ‘harness the latent empathy’ between people of religious faith, and want ‘FBOs to become agents of transformation’ (pp. 89-90). Heist and Cnaan (2016) go further, reporting that the World Conference on Religion and Peace concluded that

Religious communities are, without question, the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world today, claiming the allegiance of billions of believers and bridging the divides of race, class and nationality. They are uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time: resolving conflicts, caring for the sick and needy, promoting peaceful co-existence among all peoples (p. 6).

This suggests a role in bridging gaps between both religious recipients and secular development organisations.

Wilson (2017) refers to a need for ‘a multiple ontologies approach ... [using] broad cross-cutting categories’. As helpful examples of these categories, she lists, with explanations: ‘history and time ...; political and societal organization...; resources and land ...; [and] power and authority’. She also notes ‘wonder’ and ‘awe’ as alternative categories that do not carry ‘the same conceptual restrictions as “religious” and “secular”’ (pp. 1088-1089). Similarly McGregor et al. (2012) write of the need to listen to ‘local articulations of religious teachings that shape the type of development that is desired’ (p. 1131). As Wilson (2017) says: ‘we must be open to the possibility that different people inhabit different worlds’ (p. 1083).

Some writers advocate going further than being just good listeners. For example, agreeing with Habermas’s position on this point, Wilson (2017) calls for researchers to be ‘multilingual in different

ontologies', being literate in different categories. On this point she claims that 'religious actors are "fluent" in both secular and religious vernacular ... yet the same is rarely true of secular actors' (p. 1090). Deneulin and Rakodi, (2011) consider it important that 'when studying unfamiliar or multi-religious contexts, [researchers] develop a basic religious literacy, particularly with respect to how different faith traditions interpret the core concerns of development, such as justice, equality, poverty, and sustainability' (p. 51).

Continuing, Deneulin and Rakodi, (2011) argue that 'Both research ... and development projects and programs ... need to engage with religious doctrines and interpretations ... [and, further] debate between the development establishment and religious organizations is necessary (p. 52)'. Ager and Ager, (2016) support in-depth engagement, writing of the need to 'create ... dialogical engagement ... to embrace the post-secular age' (p. 104). In this connection they describe arrangements of different governments to head towards formalised arrangements to facilitate this dialogue. They contend this sort of engagement should be open-ended, diverse, and localised, and should aim to include critiquing, clashing and challenging, rather than simply accommodating other views.

However Bradley, (2013) says there is a 'compelling argument' that in 'the rush to include religion in development it is the dominant view of religion that is getting heard' (p. 12), and that often excludes women and minorities. Just as Matheson, (2006) observed that 'religion tend[ed] to be written out of the story' (p. 185), so Bradley warns of a continuation of that danger in the way the parties might engage with religious people. There is a need, then, to put in place the normal professional standards and techniques of consultation. Remembering from earlier in this chapter the way organisations like DFID, UNFPA and the German government are encouraging engagement with religious groups, it would be useful, in a further research project, to investigate who represents religious partners in those exchanges and their credentials to speak for the variety of religious views including locally representative and project-specific views.

In summary of this subsection, many writers call for Western development organisations to become religiously literate, and for all partners to engage in dialogue and debate about underlying religious and worldview assumptions.

2.8 Agency

So far this chapter has addressed three interwoven themes – religion, secularism and post-secularism – that can be used to describe the worldviews of different partners in international development, and those themes will shape much of the rest of this thesis. One further topic, that of *agency*, is added here to the worldview basket of ideas as it seems to have the potential to influence donor-recipient relationships.

Agency is taken to mean the ability of recipients, as individuals or as local communities, to make or influence decisions that affect their development, their freedom for self-determination. It is the idea that, as Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have said, ‘The best way to predict your future is to create it’¹³⁷. Barker and Jane (2016) write of agency having the ‘notions of freedom, free will, action, creativity, originality and the very possibility of change through the actions of free agents. ... agency is ... the socially constructed capacity to act’ (p. 280-282). Hewson (2012), similar to Mayr (2012), writes of agency being based on ‘three key properties of human beings’, that they are ‘purposive and intentional’; they have ‘power ... [and] wield resources and capabilities’; and they are ‘rational. They use their intelligence to guide their actions’ (p. 2).

In his influential book *Development as freedom* Sen, (1999) advances *freedom* – which for him is similar to *agency* in that it is about people’s autonomy – as the central theme in development. His key proposition is that ‘Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principle means’ (p. 10)¹³⁸. Throughout his book Sen’s emphasis is on institutional arrangements, that is ‘the state, the market, the legal system, political parties, the media, public interest groups and public discussion forums, among others’ (pp. xii-xiii). As he says ‘Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions. Our opportunities and prospects depend crucially on what institutions exist and how they function’ (p. 142). This emphasis on institutions is supported by Allen, (2012)¹³⁹. Hewson (2012) also writes of Marxism’s goal of ‘transforming the world ... “making history”’ (p. 4), including through altering hierarchies and structures. With a similar emphasis on structures and institutions Hewson writes of other theorists who consider social structures ‘are not constraining but also enabling’ (p. 5); and Barker and Jane (2016) endorse the role of social structures as ‘an enabling condition of action’ (p282). Sen (1999) went on to say: ‘Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency’ and of providing for individual freedoms such that people are able to ‘choose the life [they] have reason to value’ (p. xii)¹⁴⁰.

Sen’s approach looks at freedom as being something largely granted from above¹⁴¹. However Hewson (2012) also addresses what he calls ‘the basic duality of the human condition’ where humans ‘at once make their social contexts and are made by them; we are actors but also acted upon’ (p. 6). Looking further at this dual approach, O’Hearn, (2009) writes ‘there are deeply troubling elements in Sen’s basic assumptions about the nature of people and his lack of a feasible prescription for

¹³⁷ Retrieved 25 October 2018 from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/328848-the-best-way-to-predict-your-future-is-to-create>

¹³⁸ Similarly on p. 53

¹³⁹ p. 439

¹⁴⁰ Similarly on pp. 74, 86-87

¹⁴¹ Sen (1999, p. 297-298)

reaching his stated goals' (p. 9). Shanmugaratnam, (2001)¹⁴², while expressing less concern, echoes O'Hearn's concern. So O'Hearn, (2009)¹⁴³ centres on social networks that form a large part of people's lives, and on people's inner sense of freedom. Looking first at social networks Corbridge, (2002) sees social communities as the leaders of change, especially for poorer people, who tend to act in social groups and struggle 'against the powers of vested interests' (p. 209). Similar thoughts are expressed by Hill, (2003)¹⁴⁴, Murphy (2014)¹⁴⁵ and Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher and Koch-Schulte (2000)¹⁴⁶ who consider that focussing on external institutions does not sufficiently recognise the need for working on 'the collective capability for self-determination' (Murphy, 2014, p. 320).

Both of these concepts of agency – institutional, and based around informal communities – are largely social constructs. As a challenge to those concepts Hewson (2012)¹⁴⁷ notes the approach of postmodernism which, he says, disagrees with the ideas of intentionality, power and rationality, which form the basis of agency. Aligned with this postmodern approach some writers come from a psychological or spiritual background to address personal freedom. These approaches can be either secular, as in some well-known material by Fromm, (1942), Maslow, (1943) and Rogers, (1961); or spiritual, for example Bruce, (1977); or a combination. Applications from these could be brought into the development milieu.

In the context of less developed countries, agency includes the concept of patronism, or patron-client theory. Patronism is about social structures that define people's expectations of their roles in society¹⁴⁸. It assumes highly differentiated vertical layering consisting of two essential parties – patrons and clients – with often a third party of brokers or middlemen. Box 3 gives an example of one anthropologist's view of the spiritual basis for patronism, and its effects. This spiritual or religious basis brings patronism into the worldview discourse of this thesis.

Ferrol-Schulte, Ferse and Glaser (2014) write 'Patron-client relationships ... have been described as "contracts ... based on ... reciprocal obligations expressed in the exchange of services"' (p. 63), and Bobonis, Gertler, Gonzalez-Navarro and Nichter (2019) define the arrangement as 'the exchange of contingent benefits for political support' (p. 1). Uberti (2015) adds a sense of structure in saying 'patron-client networks can be thought of as informal modes of organizing state-society relations, or the relation between elites and non-elites (or between the dominant class and the middle class)' (p. 335). Boyle (1998) describes patronism as associated with a strong desire to avoid conflict and

¹⁴² p. 271

¹⁴³ p. 9

¹⁴⁴ pp. 123, 130

¹⁴⁵ pp. 329-330

¹⁴⁶ pp. 9-12, 227

¹⁴⁷ p. 5

¹⁴⁸ e.g. Bobonis, Gertler, Gonzalez-Navarro, and Nichter (2019), Boissevain (1969), Ferrol-Schulte, Ferse, and Glaser (2014), Stein (1984), Uberti (2015)

maintain face; a concern with status; loyalty and subordination to superiors; deference to paternalistic authority; and group dependence (p. 110-114).

Box 3: Fatalism and development: Nepal's struggle for modernization (Bista, 1991)

Bista was a Nepali anthropologist who taught in Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu until 1989, when he founded a development NGO. His book provides a strong criticism of aspects of what he saw as Nepali culture at his time of writing, 30 years ago. He described the beliefs of the rulers in Nepal, including that the deities have set the world up in social strata, with people having no ability in this life to move between the strata. He considered this had fostered a ruling class of self-serving elite and a mind-set among the common people that there was no point in attempting social or economic change. In his opinion the worldview of the elite went even further, seeing development as a negative activity interrupting and interfering with the proper cyclical processes of the unseen spiritual powers that operate the world. Hence, in his view, fatalism governed people's attitude to the possibility of change, and the common people had a strong sense of dependency on the higher social strata.

However these arrangements differ from Ferrol-Schulte et al.'s contracts in a number of respects. There is an assumption of difference in power of the two parties, so the relationship has 'asymmetry' (Ferrol-Schulte et al., 2014, p63; Carney, 1989, p. 43): it is an unequal relationship. This is a result of the patron having access to resources that the client does not control, and to people in power (Boissevain, 1969¹⁴⁹; Carney, 1989¹⁵⁰). As Stein (1984) says: the patron offers protection, security, predictability, resources, reduction of stress, stability and reliability, especially 'if you yourself cannot act directly with the bureaucracy or the state' (p. 31): these relationships are 'forms of social security back-up' (Ferrol-Schulte et al. (2014, p. 72)). Secondly a patron-client relationship is more than a business arrangement. Given the comprehensive coverage of the relationship – a 'multifaceted, or multi-stranded ... relationship' (Ferrol-Schulte et al., 2014, p. 63) – clients 'feel an affinity or loyalty to their patron, [having] a "lopsided friendship"' (Carney, 1989, p. 44) that often demands compliance from clients for political agendas of the patron (Uberti, 2015). As Uberti (2015) says, in these countries, activities are 'saturated by network loyalties and obligations [so that] ... the allocation of resources is never conducted impersonally (through the market, the state bureaucracy), as is the case in advanced capitalist democracies' (p. 329). In this Carney (1989) asserts there is a degree of reciprocity that brings advantage to the patron. Thirdly patronism exists in a social milieu that relies on these hierarchical structures for stability, as they provide 'the organizational framework ... to ... engender social stability, acting as the functional equivalent of formal bureaucracies in more advanced polities' (Uberti, 2015)¹⁵¹ (p. 339).

Building on that third facet, while some writers assert that patronism is pervasive globally (Boissevain, 1969), being part of common human relationships (Stein, 1984), it is generally considered to be particularly prevalent in less developed countries. Uberti (2015) considers this

¹⁴⁹ p. 379

¹⁵⁰ pp. 44-45

¹⁵¹ p. 339

social arrangement is 'endemic to the particular stage of development that characterises most developing societies' (p. 328) and is an inevitable part of emerging economies and democracies. Ferrol-Schulte et al. (2014) agree with parts of Uberti's view, writing that 'patron-client relations thrive in conditions of poverty ... weak governance, marginalization, lack of social, financial and legal security and poor national integration' (p. 63). Bobonis et al. (2019) and Carney (1989) also support this view, arguing from the opposite position that with development, citizens 'may be less reliant on clientelist relationships as a coping mechanism' (Bobonis et al. 2019, p. 4). Hewson (2012) introduces Marxism into the discussion: seeing a need to change these unequal structures rather than work with them, Marxism was about altering the usual imbalance of power to achieve grassroots strength.¹⁵²

So *agency* is an important value to Western FBOs and, as presented in chapter 1, it fits an agenda of enhancing empowerment and self-determination. On this point, Western faith-based and secular organisations connect well.

However capacity building is not always wanted in other cultures, and might conflict with fundamental values in recipient communities. Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam (2015) write of 'deep differences between Western notions of democracy and Eastern governmental philosophies', and 'nuances of how one culture interprets constructs like empowerment' (p. 119). Boyle (1998) writes that in some Asian countries 'order and social harmony ultimately depend on unconditional deference to a political hierarchy' (p. 100), or 'political and business leaders' expect 'deference' in a climate of 'pervasive patron-client relationships' (p107). Western styles are perceived as being either individualistic, possibly working against broader community welfare; or, for a larger group, based on a simple majority vote, potentially leading to large disenfranchised groups. Sivaraksa (1992) expresses concern about this, writing of the need for a spiritually informed development that values communalism. Boley et al. (2015) and Hofstede (1984) point out that collectivist cultures in Asian or less developed countries tend to place high value on community cohesion, and will attempt to achieve unanimity. Developing this theme of cohesion in collectivist cultures, Hofstede (1984) writes 'In order to preserve harmony, the truth may have to be strained a bit' (p. 89). Sivaraksa (1992) supports this, writing that Westerners 'seem to feel somewhat guilty' about corruption, whereas people in at least some Asian countries 'appear to show no regret whatsoever' (p. 20).

Reinforcing this potential cultural conflict, Boyle (1998) argues that for some Asian cultures, 'The notion prevails that society should be hierarchical and that all men and women are inherently unequal' (p. 99). Sivaraksa (1992) considered the Asian hierarchical model has descended from 'superstition and ignorance' and from a 'concept of divine and sacred rulers' (p. 6). The practice of

¹⁵² pp. 3-4

Buddhism can be different from the ideal, for example as told by Bista (1991): see Box 3. Bista went on to explain: 'Most Nepalis of the present generation ... have been brought up according to a belief system that posits that one's circumstances have been determined by a supreme deity; that their lives have been fated' (p76-77). Karma from a previous life has decided people's state and this cannot be altered in this life except by 'powerful supernatural forces' and actions with religious merit (p77). 'Achievement motivation' is absent as it leads nowhere (p. 78), and 'success due to personal competence is ... therefore both deviant and threatening' (p. 82).

This discussion emphasises the point of relevance to this thesis: that in decision-making processes in international development, assumptions of power relationships and expectations by the parties of each other could vary substantially. This is an example of worldview differences that could affect relationships. Writers agree it is socially constructed, and Bista (1991), as an insider in a less developed country, considered that in the case of Nepal it is built on deeper religious assumptions. This topic of foundations for views on agency will reappear in chapter 8.

As to the value of patronism some writers have been highly critical. Stein (1984), argued that 'while the patron-client relationship might be functional in the short term and at a superficial level of analysis, it is dysfunctional in the long run and at a deeper level of analysis' (p. 30). As noted above he listed a number of short term benefits. But longer term he considered 'patronage requires the very gap which it assists the client in bridging' (p. 31). There is a 'mutual dependency that encourages neither [partner] to grow ... a parent-child relationship that capitalizes on anxiety and ... requires the hostile universe that it mediates' (p. 33): it 'limits the developmental and therefore adaptive capacities of role participants' (p. 34). In effect Carney (1989) supports Stein's assertion, writing that 'By distributing favors to ... clients, the patron gains compliance from clients' (p. 44), and considers this compliance is 'the most important aspect of patron-client relationships' (p. 45). Bista (1991) considered that patronism as practised in Nepal at his time of writing had fostered a spirit of fatalism that worked against development. In an ethnographic study of Bangladesh, Maloney (1988) described the following outcomes of patronism: seeking patronage substituted for creation of new wealth; recognition of personalised authority led to fluctuating policies on development programmes; and strong hierarchies inhibited examination of objective goals of institutions. As a result the institutions that could have carried development forward in a coherent way were weak and had limited effectiveness. He wrote also that what the West considers as highly negative attributes of exploitation and dependency, Bangladeshis considered normal, necessary, and morally right, with a 'complex maze' (p. 43) of entitlement, obligations and indulgences. He considered that in the past that attitude had ensured survival but now it had become a drag on modern approaches to economic development. Boyle (1998) writes that patronism 'tended to isolate decision-makers from the concerns of people and communities affected by major projects' (p114).

However in a more recent case study, Ferrol-Schulte et al. (2014) were less certain of the negative outcomes. They asked whether patron-client relationships ‘contribute towards household livelihood sustainability ... or ... entrap clients in a self-perpetuating system of dependency, poverty and debt’ (p. 64), and considered ‘the long term effects of client-patron relationships ... remain unknown’ (p. 72). Partly, they considered the answer depends on putting in place arrangements ‘to weaken the exploitative aspects’ and seek options for ‘affecting and using the leverage’ (p. 72) that patron-client relationships offer. They did not elaborate on what those actions might be: they ‘are only just being identified’.

2.9 Summary and conclusions from chapter 2

To help appreciate areas of potential difficulty that the parties who work in international development might have in connecting, this chapter has looked at the worldviews of various parties. A typology of three parties – recipients, secular donors and practitioners, and religious donors and practitioners – emerged as a helpful construct. Further, Habermas’s idea that we live now in a post-secular world emerged as one helpful theoretical frame for examining the relationships. Academic literature indicates that secular assumptions from the West erect a significant barrier to communication between the parties, and can be considered an injustice in that they impose an agenda that is out of tune with recipient views. As an additional approach, agency, or patron-client theory, seems potentially crucial to a partnership between recipients and donors or practitioners as the autonomy for recipients to make decisions, even if by group consensus, is implicit in relationships as described in this thesis. This theory also rests on underlying worldviews but, in contrast to the thesis’s dominant three-party image, agency provides a two-party typology – the West and recipients.

Chapter 3

Organisations and research issues

This chapter combines with chapter 2 to complete the literature review. To reduce the complexity of the review, given the breadth and depth of examination of worldviews of development partners, chapter 2 was devoted to that single topic. Chapter 3 now expands and completes the literature review by addressing three other themes that are important to the research.

If, as the preceding chapter has highlighted, development now occurs in a post-secular age, then it could be expected that FBOs would play a significant role in that process. Understanding what comprises an FBO is therefore important. Using published literature this chapter investigates FBOs and their place in development programmes. It also addresses the contentious issue of proselytising, and it introduces some issues regarding cross-worldview communication. Finally chapter 3 identifies gaps in the literature and intended contributions the thesis will make to global knowledge.

3.1 Faith based organisations

FBOs, which in the typology for this thesis make up one of the three partner groups in development, have evolved alongside the struggles over the re-emergence of religion. I have singled them out for attention here as they could have the potential to be key players in facilitating connections in my triangle of relationships between the partners. So it is important to this thesis to appreciate who they are and their place in the current market. As Rakodi (2011b) asked regarding

social and political aspects of the relationships between religion, society and development practice ... What are the characteristics of “faith-based” organizations, do they play significant and distinctive roles in development and service provision, and what are the implications for other development actors and achieving development objectives? (p. 9)

One limitation of this research is that it looks mainly at Christian FBOs. Academic research has focussed on these ‘almost exclusively’ (Borchgrevink & Erdal, 2017, p. 216), Fountain (2015) agreeing that ‘Christian missionaries have received the greatest attention’ (p. 87), compared with missionaries of other faiths.

Ferris (2005) writes: ‘there is no generally accepted definition of faith-based organizations’ (p. 312). However Heist and Cnaan (2016) list six criteria for ‘an NGO to be defined as a faith-based organization’ (p. 3), a list they acknowledge is idealistic and not fully adhered to:

- ‘the sacredness of life’, acknowledging that all people are ‘created in the image of God’;

- ‘long-term and consistent presence in areas with great needs’, bringing ‘faith assets such as people, networks, leaders, infrastructure, buildings, and donations’;
- ‘apply and obey their conscience’, so bringing ‘religious doctrines they advocate for the needy and serve as a voice of conscience’;
- ‘operate from a standpoint of faith’, which helps for ‘coping and resiliency’;
- ‘uphold the theology of mercy and forgiveness’; and
- ‘emphasize charity’, that is ‘the willingness to give time, attention, and resources in abundance’¹⁵³.

From this list of criteria and from a number of other authors¹⁵⁴, and for the purpose of this thesis, we could say that, in international aid and development, an FBO is a non-governmental organisation that is affiliated with or supported by religious bodies, or has religious faith as a core of its constitution and operations.

Various writers¹⁵⁵ trace the evolution of FBOs through centuries and across different religious faiths, and demonstrate their ebb and flow, in a counterpoint to secular NGOs, since the Second World War. Despite some distinctive features, as described above and later, the main activity of FBOs is to fulfil the normal tasks of international development like any development agency (e.g. Paras (2014, p. 445)). However diversity characterises them as much as uniformity. Lunn (2009) describes the sector as having ‘enormous complexity’ (p. 942), and Baumgart-Ochse et al. (2017) affirm that ‘religious actors’ are far from ‘homogenous’ (p. 1071). Bradley (2013), leaning on Clarke (2008, p. 25), presents five categories of FBOs:

1. Faith-based representative organisations or apex bodies that rule on doctrinal matters. These organisations govern the faithful and represent them at state and global levels.
2. Faith-based charitable or development organisations which mobilise the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups and which fund or manage programmes which tackle poverty or social exclusion.
3. Faith-based political organisations which deploy faith as a political construct and mobilise social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives ...
4. Faith-based missionary organisations who seek to spread faith messages beyond the faithful. They seek to convert non-believers.

¹⁵³ *Charity* is a contested term in development, as it is sometimes used to denote handouts, which is often considered to have a negative influence on empowerment. Heist and Cnaan’s description of charity does not relate to that issue, and is more about a generous spirit.

¹⁵⁴ E.g. Bradley (2013, p. 13); Clarke and Jennings (2008, p. 6); Ferris (2005, p. 312); Haynes (2014, p. 1f); Heist and Cnaan (2016, p. 2); McGregor (2006, p. 167)

¹⁵⁵ E.g. Bradley (2013, p. 14); Ferris (2005, p. 315); Fountain (2015, pp. 85-87); Heist and Cnaan (2016, p. 3); Lunn (2009, p. 943); Lynch and Schwarz (2016, p. 637); Paras, (2014, pp. 442, 443)

5. Faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organisations. These organisations promote radical or militant forms of faith identity and use violence justified on the grounds of faith. (p. 14)

For this thesis I am interested in organisations that engage in the activities of categories 2, 3 and 4.

Paras (2014), writing of 'fluid' and 'blurry' boundaries, considered even that five-category typology understates the complexities, and warned against the 'pitfall of classification' (pp. 440-452). Vander Zaag (2013a) writes of variations between FBOs that 'accept the secular separation between religion and development', and those 'who hold to more integral views on the relation of religion and faith to development' (pp. 339-340).

Regarding the size of the FBO sector, Heist and Cnaan, (2016), in a global review, conclude: 'It was surprising that there is no one comprehensive source about the scope and magnitude of faith-based international social and economic development' (p. 14). However different writers¹⁵⁶ describe FBO constituencies numbering in the hundreds of millions, or more; of annual budgets of billions of dollars; and of FBOs being the principal front-line agents of human development, especially in countries with weak governance.

3.1.1 Recognition of FBOs

The role of FBOs in international development has become more recognised in parallel with the mixed reception of a revived role for religion. Clarke and Ware wrote in 2015 that 'for decades FBOs were ignored in mainstream discussions of community development', but now 'they are becoming increasingly visible' (pp. 38, 46). In 2013 Bradley proclaimed boldly: 'The significance and impact of religion [and by implication, FBOs] on and for development processes has finally been realised' (p. 8). However most authors¹⁵⁷ note more equivocation about the rapport, describing frequently a degree of discomfort in relationships, from both FBOs and secular organisations. Literature from the point of view of recipients is more limited. It could be concluded that FBOs are accepted as having an important role, but the details are contested and varied.

Looking at New Zealand, academic literature is meagre¹⁵⁸. One useful compilation is McLoughlin's MDS thesis (McLoughlin, 2011). Limiting her research to views of FBOs, she reports that 'FBOs consider "the secular" as opposed to "the religious" to hold a more privileged position in New Zealand ... [believed] that public expressions of Christianity were no longer acceptable', and feel

¹⁵⁶ E.g. Clarke (2007, pp. 87-88); Clarke and Ware (2015, pp. 43, 44); Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 52); Ferris (2005, pp. 312, 313); Fountain and Petersen (2018, pp. 405, 406); Heist and Cnaan (2016, pp. 6-11); Lunn (2009, p. 943); Lynch and Schwarz (2016, p. 636); Myers (2011, p. 33); O'Brien and Palmer (2007, pp. 58-59); Paras (2014, pp. 441-445); Vander Zaag (2013b, p. 33). Borchgrevink and Erdal (2017) and IRIN (2012), describe large amounts of Islamic aid, directed mainly at the Muslim diaspora.

¹⁵⁷ E.g. Clarke (2007, pp. 79-89); Clarke and Ware (2015, pp. 38, 46); Lunn (2009, pp. 939, 940); Lynch and Schwarz (2016, p. 636); Paras (2014, pp. 442, 444)

¹⁵⁸ While writing from New Zealand, most of Fountain's research relates to global issues.

there is 'marginalisation of religion'. One FBO interviewee's opinion was that 'New Zealand is known as the most secular country in the world'. McLoughlin considered that 'secular development experts may lack an awareness of the significance of religion in the lives of recipients', and reported FBOs as feeling that 'donors are imposing their "culture of disbelief", despite faith being important to recipients'. This is seen as an 'imperialistic' approach. One of her informants 'contrasted the difference between acknowledging religious protocols and understanding development issues from a religious perspective' and considered 'secular donors have difficulty talking about religion'. Conversely, for themselves, FBOs reported that their own 'development work is infused with their religious values' (pp. 64-65). Some FBOs 'believed a shift was occurring in their treatment by society' (pp. 64-65, 83-89) with religiousness being tolerated, even welcomed by some non-religious people but, to the time of writing that thesis, in 2011, this was limited to private funders.

In New Zealand McLoughlin (2011) states that some FBOs have responded to their perceptions and experience of secular donors by establishing two separate arms, dealing respectively with religious and other development activities. Opinions vary among FBOs as to whether this arrangement compromises their principles. Regardless, most see that separation as artificial, a demarcation 'forced on them by secular donors', and counterproductive to the work of development. However it has allowed them to continue or even expand their activities, with 'mission' activities funded from church bases and other development activities funded from non-religious supporters (pp. 91-98).

So McLoughlin's findings, as at 2011, support the trend in global literature but she adds distinctive New Zealand details regarding perceptions of and responses to relationships with secular development agencies and the broader community. This is useful background for this present research.

Rakodi (personal communication, 2015), leader of the RaD study, expressed disappointment that the research results had been largely ignored in DFID's on-going work; and Jennings (personal communication, 2015), who conducted a pilot study that led to that programme, agreed with Rakodi that in practice the research outputs had been side-lined.

3.1.2 Distinctives of FBOs

Clarke and Ware (2015) write: 'FBOs share the same basic characteristics as "secular" NGOs: independence, being not-for-profit, voluntary and altruistic' (p. 40). As a conference speaker put it: 'Are FBOs merely "Oxfam with hymns?"' (Taylor, 2010)¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁹ This expression has been attributed to a variety of sources.

A number of writers¹⁶⁰ describe the potential or, commonly, they consider, actual advantages of FBOs. Chief among the advantages they claim are: a long term presence in poor rural communities, giving them an unrivalled connection with and respect from recipients; a high degree of motivation through their religious beliefs, to serve the poor and powerless; an understanding of development as being integrated with spiritual values, so adding to the conception of holistic; and access to resources of people and money that secular organisations do not generally have. The endorsements of the performance of FBOs are impressive, although some writers caution against hasty assessments. For example in 2012 Leurs wrote that: ‘most of the claims of FBO distinctiveness and comparative advantage are untested by empirical work’ (p. 708), and Heist & Cnaan, writing in 2016 (p. 5), agree.

In addition some write of FBOs having a normative role rather than being mere instruments for the agendas of their secular funders. James (2011) lists ‘three rather more contentious “spiritual” advantages, which may be claimed by people of faith but discounted or actively resisted by others who profess no religious faith:

- ‘spiritual teaching
- ‘hope, meaning, and purpose
- ‘transcendental power’ (pp. 111-112).

James explains these points as coming from ‘the notion that faith provides more than a mere institutional vehicle: it provides a spiritual fuel for development’. For the term ‘spiritual fuel’ I infer he means energy rather than a pathway or destination. So ‘spiritual teaching’ ‘emphasises some critical development principles, such as justice, compassion, reconciliation, and stewardship’; and he writes of FBO-based ‘hope, meaning, and purpose’ as providing ‘the antidote to the fear, powerlessness and dependence that are at the root of many development challenges today’.

Regarding ‘transcendental power’ he writes: ‘at the heart of faith-based development is faith in a transcendental power. This divine power energises human spirits and – many believe – goes beyond human effort’. He mentions prayer as one example of ways in which this transcendental power might be activated (pp. 113-114). Taken collectively, other authors¹⁶¹ express largely similar views.

¹⁶⁰ E.g. Clarke (2007, p. 80); Cochrane (2016, p. 91); Christian (2017, p. 45); Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, pp. 45-46); Ferris (2005, pp. 323, 324); Heist and Cnaan (2016, pp. 5, 6); James (2011, pp. 111-112); Kraft (2017, pp. 2, 3); Leurs (2012, p. 708); Lunn (2009, pp. 944-946); McGregor et al., (2012, pp. 1142-1144); McLoughlin (2011, pp. iii, 58); Narayan, Chambers, et al., (2000, p. 222); Sidibe (2016, pp. 2, 4); World Vision, (2015a, p. 1); World Vision (2016, pp. 6, 24); World Vision (2017, p. 43)

¹⁶¹ E.g. Baumgart-Ochse et al, (2017, p. 1070); Brown (2007, p. 402); Clarke and Ware (2015, p. 40); Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 49); Deneulin and Zampini-Davies (2017, p. 110); Harrington (2007, pp. 545, 555-556); McGregor (2006, pp. 170f); McLoughlin (2011, pp. 95-96); Narayan, Chambers, et al., (2000, p. 222); Paras (2014, pp. 443, 447, 448); Schwarz (2018, pp. 49-51); World Vision (2015a, pp. 5-9)

Looking at one FBO, Paras (2014) writes that ‘all of the organisation’s activities ... are infused with religious significance’ (p. 447)¹⁶².

However, in academic journals, few if any writers on FBOs express explicitly the textbook expositions of a religious worldview that were given in section 2.2 of this thesis. It seems that, despite a significant amount of common ground on worldview assumptions, there is a silent gulf between the two groups of writers. The reasons are not immediately clear and are beyond the scope of this thesis.

A further query is over the extent to which James’s ‘contentious “spiritual” advantages’ are exclusive to FBOs as some of them might apply in a degree to many competent development organisations¹⁶³. There might be particular ways that FBOs understand these terms, but James did not enunciate any. So even if writers, as above, consider the contributions of FBOs in these areas elevate benefits quantitatively, it is possible that the final point, of overtly seeking to access ‘transcendental power’, might be the only ‘advantage’ that is qualitatively unique to FBOs. This could be a topic for further research.

3.1.3 Challenges facing FBOs

Various authors have queried the extent to which FBOs might have a unique role. They have described challenges faced by FBOs as including a need for greater professionalism¹⁶⁴ particularly regarding external collaboration and, to a lesser degree, internal management procedures; their credibility to donors¹⁶⁵, mainly regarding their religious value systems, including how to communicate about those, but also their histories of complicity with colonial practices; and a more philosophical question¹⁶⁶ regarding the extent to which they might maintain their distinctiveness, and how. The first challenge – regarding the need for professionalism – is not unique to FBOs as it reflects a common concern throughout the development industry, and needs no further attention here. Chapter 2 addressed part of the second challenge – about communicating over religious assumptions

¹⁶² Similarly Sivaraksa (1992) writes that to a Buddhist all civic and political institutions ‘are permeated and administered’ with spiritual values.

¹⁶³ E.g. the Global Justice Movement (GJM) (n.d.) has a mission ‘To make the world work for 100% of humanity in the shortest possible time, through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone.’ A recent issue of the journal *Globalizations* (2017, 14:7) was devoted largely to the work of that movement. Further, environmental stewardship appears as a core value in many modern secular development organisations and in the Millennium Declaration and the more recent 2030 Agenda (section 2.3). Then the second ‘spiritual’ advantage – ‘hope, meaning and purpose’ – relate in part to empowerment, which is another core value of much modern development (see section 2.8).

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Clarke (2007, pp. 81, 88); Ferris (2005, pp. 318, 325); Heist and Cnaan (2016, pp. 12-13); McLoughlin (2011, p. 92); Paras (2014, p. 441, 445)

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Clarke (2007, pp. 81, 88); Clarke and Ware (2015, p. 46); Ferris (2005, p. 316); James (2011, pp. 110-111); Lunn (2009, pp. 944, 945); McLoughlin (2011, pp. 88, 91); Paras (2014, pp. 443, 451)

¹⁶⁶ E.g. Clarke (2007, pp. 84, 90); Ferris (2005, p. 317); Harrington (2007, p. 556); Heist and Cnaan (2016, p. 3); McLoughlin (2011, p. 95); Paras (2014, pp. 441, 443, 448-450, 451, 452, 455)

– and the other part – complicity with colonialism – while being mentioned by some writers, does not seem to have been addressed in any depth in the existing academic literature. It is the third point – of whether FBOs have a distinctive ethos and role because of their religious views – that is most relevant to this thesis.

Expanding, then, on that final challenge there is some frustration among FBOs that they are treated as agents for secular donors, as instruments of secular development programmes. Back in 1980 Goulet recognised the potential for FBO acquiescence in this, applying his expression ‘one-eyed giants’ (p. 488) to religious development as well as to secularists (see section 2.7), and urging FBOs to maintain their ‘essential religious values’ if they are to be effective agents of change. Clarke (2007) considered that British FBOs had had a ‘quasi-secularism ... largely forced on them by DFID’s antipathy to faith-based value systems’ (p. 84), and Baumgart-Ochse et al. (2017) ask whether religious actors make ‘a specific normative contribution’ (p. 1070) or are just ‘a potential resource’ (p. 1069). Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) assert:

the role of religion in development, when acknowledged, remains instrumental, not intrinsic. Religious organizations are recognized in their role in humanitarian relief ... However, their role in shaping people’s values and conception of development is rarely considered. Religion in developing countries is much more than welfare provision and charity (p. 49).

They write further: ‘A transformation of development studies is required if it is to take the relationships between religion and development fully into account’ (p. 49). The same comment could be applied to development practice. James (2011) concludes: ‘Values and attitudes must change for meaningful development to be achieved – and values and attitudes are the core business of religion’ (p. 114).

Delving further into attitudes of major funders, UK’s DFID (2012) published a document called *Faith partnership principles*¹⁶⁷. This was more inclusive of religion than most governmental edicts. It was upfront about distinctive views that FBOs can bring to development, the desirability of seeking to work through differences, and in the end, the need ‘to be ... transparent ... about the situations when collaborative work ... may not be possible’ (p. 8). This latter point was refreshing, acknowledging autonomy between a secular funder and a FBO deliverer of services. However, modifying that comment, the paper presented examples of development assistance where FBOs managed DFID funds (pp. 4-5). In all cases the FBOs delivered according to DFID’s agenda. The FBOs might have been fully in tune with DFID’s goals, but there is no indication of a distinctive additional faith flavour to the programmes, and hence the issue of instrumentality compared to substantive contributions arises again. Two years later UNDP (2014) published a document that was similar but more

¹⁶⁷ See section 2.7 regarding DFID in particular.

equivocal, dancing between the competing forces. While endorsing the high value FBOs can add to development programmes, and advocating meaningful dialogue over policies and programmes, and while providing extensive guidelines on how to engage, it has its own bottom lines. These address shared values regarding gender and other human rights issues, and state that it will not 'engage with faith actors who proselytize' (pp. 3-20). Its approach expresses sympathy but stops short of seeking negotiated solutions that envisage movement in the values of the donor party. Its support is conditional on a secular agenda, and that could be seen as coercive rather than collaborative. So the issues are complex and contested. For its part World Vision (2015a) stated it has begun to explore ways of moving beyond instrumentality (p. 1).

Finally, from a different angle, looking at opportunities for FBOs to be effective agents of change, and in topics where their role could be either instrumental or intrinsic, Sidibe (2016) lists three challenges: working collaboratively to address sexual violence and the needs of adolescent girls; turning back religious extremism; and using their 'vast community networks' for effective health and education infrastructure (p. 3).

3.2 Proselytising

This thesis has noted that proselytising is a potentially thorny issue in relationships in development: 'arguably the prickliest subject in the emerging field of religion and development' (Fountain, 2015, p. 80). It is given space here because some aspects of worldviews differ sharply between the partners, and some people bring strong emotions to the topic and, further, some people argue that it is 'central to the discipline of development studies' (Fountain, 2015, p. 91). The most commonly expressed area of concern involves FBOs, where proselytising is perceived as affecting relationships between FBOs and their secular funders and partners, and also between FBOs and their recipient partners in the field. So the main emphasis of this review of literature is on the FBO sector. However in addition some writers include donor pressure for recipients to convert to particular political or economic ideologies as a proselytising activity, and that meaning is also examined.

Clarke (2007) describes proselytising as 'converting non-adherents to the faith' (p. 84). As a starting point, and provided 'the faith' is interpreted in a broad and not necessarily religious sense, that simple definition seems to fit all writers. However most add an element of pressure or intentionality to their meaning, for example Lynch and Schwarz (2016) who describe proselytising as 'actively promoting conversion to a particular ideology or religion or otherwise pressuring potential converts to accord with specific norms and practices' (p. 636). Paras (2014, p. 441) gives a similar meaning. Fountain (2015) includes the idea of intentional change but in a wider context than religion, aimed instead at 'reworking the social practices of others' (p. 89) and concluding 'all development is proselytizing'. Different writers provide a range of classifications of organisations regarding

proselytising, particularly over the emphasis or mix of activities they undertake; and their understandings of details of what proselytising involves: for example see section 3.1 for Bradley's and Clarke's five categories of FBOs. There can also be different understandings around how ideological discussions are initiated, and any coercion, subtle or overt, that might be applied.

An important document is the 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in disaster relief' (1995), referred to hereafter as 'the Code' or 'the IFRC Code'¹⁶⁸. This Code has become a de facto international guide for development activities as well as disaster relief. As *Principle of conduct No. 3*, it states:

Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint. Humanitarian aid will be given according to the need of individuals, families and communities.

Notwithstanding the right of NGHAs¹⁶⁹ to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions. We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed (p. 3).

This requirement that 'Aid will not be used to further a particular ... religious standpoint' is similar to CID's (2017) promise that funds intended for development 'will not be used to promote a particular religious adherence' (p. 5). It is possibly significant that the IFRC Code principle speaks of organisations having the right to 'espouse' opinions, but it does not use the word 'express': the document is silent on that point.

Then as part of *Principle of conduct No. 5* the Code states 'We shall respect culture and custom' (p. 4).

Lynch and Schwarz (2016) comment that:

The Code articulated a humanitarian ethic that respects the political, religious, and cultural commitments of local populations, and sought to bring coherence to humanitarian action among NGOs, given their increasing responsibilities. The Code also required adherents to be as "apolitical" as possible in providing humanitarian and development assistance and respecting local religious and cultural beliefs (p. 638).

Turning to look at practices in the field, Heist and Cnaan (2016) concluded from a global survey that 'most faith-based development organizations focus on service delivery rather than on proselytization' (p. 12). However Lynch and Schwarz (2016) write 'Christian groups are far from united on whether or not to promote conversion. Instead, they debate within and between

¹⁶⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

¹⁶⁹ Non-Governmental Humanitarian Agencies

themselves the meaning and legitimacy of religious and cultural mandates regarding pluralism, evangelism, “witness,” and proselytism in aid work’ (p. 637). World Vision (2015a) acknowledges proselytising is ‘often raised with regard to faith-based organisations’, and ‘World Vision’s policies pre-empt proselytising and require compliance with international codes of conduct’ (pp. 1, 5). World Vision appears to draw a distinction between having an open identity, and advocacy of its position. Paras (2014) writes of FBOs having ‘schizophrenia’ in this regard (pp. 446, 451). Lynch and Schwarz (2016) provide a substantial exposition of the meaning of the IFRC Code and the ways different groups are perceived to adhere to it. They write of groups whose approaches range from:

[striving] to fulfill what they view as a biblical mandate to spread the Gospel and increase the number of Christians globally [to] ... [recoiling] from proselytizing or evangelizing, instead acting out their faith commitments through the provision of aid itself. For these Christians, obeying the mandate to relieve suffering is the primary means of enacting their faith. Efforts to convert recipient populations go against their principles of treating others’ beliefs and practices with respect. (p. 639)

The authors quoted above, in their turn, refer to others who consider some Christian organisations, perhaps even most of them, violate that code. In Lynch and Schwarz’s interviews with people, one FBO practitioner emphasised “‘it’s freedom – freedom of religion – you have the freedom to choose and to think and I wouldn’t enforce it on anyone.’” Expressing the mixed feelings in the industry about religious organisations, Paras (2014) notes ‘missionary organisations are considered marginal actors and are regarded with suspicion by donor agencies, secular NGOs and more liberal faith-based NGOs. Yet, they remain primary service providers in many development contexts’. That quote has an inconsistency about these FBOs as both ‘marginal actors’ and ‘primary service providers’. To her, in this context, ‘missionary’ is equated with an organisation that is ‘proselytist’ in its objectives. Ferris (2005) further highlights differences in opinions within the FBO sector, stating:

‘the humanitarian work of some evangelical groups is frequently criticized by traditional faith-based organizations which are committed to respecting the religious beliefs of those whom they assist. The activities of evangelical groups which combine assistance with a missionary message can have repercussions on all faith-based humanitarian organizations’ (p. 317).

Paras (2014) provides further insights. She writes: ‘the distinction between missions [i.e. “proselytist” in its objectives] and development work is a matter of internal theological debate, as well as organisational strategy’, and she states regarding missions and development, this ‘distinction is highly contested within organisations’. She considers there is a ‘lack of agreement – both among organisations and within them – about the distinction between “missions” and “development”’. She

notes, in the evolution of their theology of development, that some see ‘there is actually no distinction between “mission” and “development”, because development is the mission’. So she refers to FBOs being catalysts for church reformation, and ‘the meaning of missions and service [has shifted away] from traditional evangelism ... over the past half century’ (pp. 441-452). Giving another sense of perspective, Heist and Cnaan (2016) write: ‘It is important to note the negative side of faith-based international social and economic development, however, we should keep in mind that its magnitude is dwarfed in comparison with the size of faith-based international social and economic development support’. In their paper, this ‘negative side’ is largely about ‘putting proselytization ahead of service provision’ (p. 10).

This variety of views and practices indicates the parameters of the debate. The IFRC Code (1995) requires of its signatories that the receipt of aid is not conditional on adherence to a particular belief or ideology. The meaning of that seems clear. But its requirement in *Principle of conduct No. 3* that ‘aid will not be used to further a particular ... religious standpoint’ is more open to interpretation. For example, it is not clear whether the latter parts of that principle are intended to be explanations of the first sentence, or additions to it. As another example, it neither addresses questions around discussing beliefs, nor explains its requirement to ‘respect’ others.

Considering that word ‘respect’, Lynch and Schwarz (2016, p. 639) also avoid explaining their understanding. There is an argument that a donor or practitioner is in a position of power, and any advocacy or even discussion of an outside viewpoint is applying unfair pressure. As Lunn (2009) says: ‘People who are poor and desperate can be more vulnerable to [evangelism and conversion]’ (p. 944), and Ndiaye (2006), from an African post-colonial perspective, endorsed that opinion strongly (p. 28). To Ferris (2005), as quoted above, presenting ‘a missionary message’ equates to not ‘respecting’ other religions (pp. 317, 323). Her paper does not elaborate on what ‘a missionary message’ is, but from the context I infer she means evangelising, or spreading an understanding of the teachings of the Christian faith. To her, ‘respect’ seems to imply religious workers would not discuss religion with recipients. Bradley (2013), while not making clear what she means by the terms could, by associating proselytising with denigrating other faiths, be considered to support Ferris’s view (pp. 13-14). Looking over the development industry Ferris (2005) writes: ‘For the faith-based humanitarian community, the increasing visibility of fundamentalist or evangelical Christians in humanitarian assistance is a challenge because the evangelizing aspects of their humanitarian work often affect all Christian organizations’ (p. 323). While the context implies some understandings of these terms, Ferris does not define ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘evangelical’, or another term ‘traditional Christian’. Variations of meaning could make significant differences to how organisations are perceived, or how Ferris’s comments mesh with other writers. As an example of perceptions of terminology she describes an incident where ‘the Council of Churches in Indonesia issued a strong

statement, dissociating itself from evangelical groups working in tsunami-affected areas and emphasizing its respect for the religious beliefs of all those assisted' (p. 323).

But on the other hand it could be argued that, given the centrality of religion to the thinking of many recipient groups, 'respect' could be taken to demand engagement. This is also an implication of Wilson's (2017) paper on secularism as an ontological injustice. As another of Lynch and Schwarz's (2016) interviewees put it 'The primary distinction ... lies between applying pressure to join a particular Christian sect, versus providing materials that describe that sect or allow recipients to engage in some of its practices'. Lynch and Schwarz also describe a meeting of the World Council of Churches in 2006 where, in an ambivalent outcome that recognised the differences in approaches of FBOs, the participants failed to agree on a stance regarding proselytising, but instead 'acknowledged the difficulties inherent in the debate' (p. 640).

Some writers are open about their agenda being for development to 'transform' recipients, leading to the expression *transformational development*. One influential writer from the Christian stable is Myers (2011)¹⁷⁰, who acknowledges his debt to Hiebert (2008)¹⁷¹ and Christian (1999). Myers (2011) defines transformational development as 'seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually' (p. 3). He sees humanity as living in four directional relationships: with other people, with ourselves, with God and with our environment. He considers we have a 'marred identity' with regard to these relationships, and that to be 'productive stewards' of the world we need to have these relationships restored (p. 96). This approach connects with his understanding of a biblical worldview (pp. 8-9).

So far the expression *transformational development* is dominated by Christian writers, although there is no need in essence for it to be seen as distinctively Christian. Exceptions include Connell (1997) who, while using the expression in a less defined sense than the writers noted in the previous paragraph, raises a number of issues similar to them (p. 248). Another non-Christian writer is Sivaraksa (1992), a Thai Buddhist activist, who uses the expression in advocating transforming of the mind through training in core Buddhist philosophies and values. As quoted in chapter 2, he wrote 'radical transformation of society requires personal and spiritual change first or at least simultaneously ... Those who want to change society must understand the inner dimensions of change. It is this sense of personal transformation that religion can provide' (p. 61). All these writers are openly advocating a change of worldview as part of development, and as being integral to their understanding of what it is to be a whole person or community. DFID (2012) used the expression 'transform' regarding achieving the MDGs, and the combined effect of improved health, education, empowerment, and resilience. These DFID examples are probably not intended in the same

¹⁷⁰ pp. xxiii-xxiv

¹⁷¹ Hiebert in his turn developed his theses from Bradshaw (1993, pp. 172-175).

worldview sense as those quoted earlier in this paragraph: however DFID also advocated transformation through working on ‘difficult themes’ of contested ‘values and ethical positions ... [including] contraception; gay rights; abortion; capital punishment; gender equality; freedom of religion; blasphemy; HIV/AIDS; and other cultural and religious practices’ (pp. 2, 4).

From these points of view, development that avoids transformation, in the way that term is understood by various writers, could not be holistic, and would be short-changing the recipients.

In addition to religious advocacy, Lynch and Schwarz (2016) address what they call ‘donor proselytism’, where a donor agenda can be used in a coercive way, forcing on recipients supposedly “universalized” human rights, humanitarian norms, and cosmopolitan mandates’. Philosophically they note ‘an argument that secular assumptions make donor organisations equally faith-based to religious organisations’. Further this approach ‘begins with the assumption that the giver knows best’. Among the issues these authors line up in their sights is a neoliberal economic agenda, such as ‘market models of governance’, ‘a culture of measurement’ and an emphasis on projects that ‘prioritize allegedly “sustainable” projects (those that are thought to be capable of self-funding in a short period of time)’ (pp. 639, 642f). As one example of donor proselytism we could take MFAT’s ((2015a), (2015b)) investment priorities, one of which is to ‘help ... partner countries to identify and implement their policy reform priorities through *incentive-linked* financial support and technical assistance’ (2015a, p. 22) (2015b, p. 13) [my emphasis]. As another example we could take Sen’s (1999) advocacy for education interventions¹⁷², perhaps even impositions, to overcome unfreedoms and wanting to ensure people base their values on reasoned information. This introduces the potential for abuse of the education process, particularly over whose agenda runs the programme. Sen considers that people who feel locked in to traditional practices need to be informed of other ways of life, by which he seems to mean informed of the advantages of Western styles of freedom (pp. 62-63). This approach Lynch and Schwarz (2016) describe as a ‘top-down’ form of aid, ‘having to tailor projects to donor ideas about what works’ (p. 643), and they document that these assumptions can work against a more human approach to development. They conclude that:

if the concern with proselytism represents, as we argue, worry about the propensity to attach strings to aid in ways that attempt to change recipient populations’ cultures and customs, then we must count donors, and their secular and religious humanitarian agents, as proselytizers as well. Indeed, unlike Christian proselytism, donor proselytism today affects almost all humanitarian aid NGOs, faith-based and nonfaith-based alike (p. 644).

¹⁷² Sen (1999, pp. 32-33) presents an example of traditional barriers to educating girls in Afghanistan, and that is also a major topic of Sadeed (2011).

Developing this argument further, Heist and Cnaan (2016) argue that ‘all organizations aim to transform the way people in developing countries think and operate’ (p. 12). They agree that proselytising is possibly endemic, writing:

both secular and faith-based organizations are engaged in some form of conversion. They both try to increase the education of locals ... [so they] think more like people in the West. Some faith-based organizations add a faith element while others do not (p. 12).

Rounding this discussion out, Lynch and Schwarz (2016) argue: ‘the focus on religious proselytism as the main issue for FBOs ... stems from a “secular fiction”’ (p. 636). Paras (2014) also uses the expression ‘secular fiction’, writing that the requirement of one donor that its funds will not be used for deliberate proselytising ‘leads both actors to adopt a “secular fiction” that is both philosophically and practically incoherent, even if administratively understandable’ (p. 448). That fiction assumes that ‘aid should be framed in secular ... terms only’. Lynch and Schwarz consider this comes partly from ignorance of ‘the complexity of religious ethics’ around ‘the meanings and role of proselytism’, and ‘very potent ... “donor proselytism”’. In the end the issue to them is about ‘undue compellence in the provision of aid’, regardless of the source or focus of that ‘compellence’ (pp. 636, 644). So McLoughlin (2011) argues that ‘secularism could be perceived not as a neutral position to religion but as a rival religious claim’ (p. 61). UNFPA (2014) supports that stance, arguing: ‘Secular organizations are erroneously considered as “neutral” but they are themselves guided by values and ideologies, not always made transparent’ (p. 4). Ager and Ager (2016) consider this critique has gained traction, writing ‘the secular is no longer accepted as a neutral frame’ (p. 101).

For the purpose of this thesis, I define proselytising as: attempting to change the worldview of another party: especially, in development, donors and practitioners attempting to change the worldview of a recipient partner. That definition covers the common usage of *proselytising* as a religious term, and also allows its usage as a term for economic, secularist, environmental, political or other worldview transformations. Key elements include the notion of deliberate attempts to change; and worldviews, as being something deeper than cultural expressions. This topic reappears in Chapter 8, intermeshing this academic literature and the fieldwork for this thesis.

3.3 Communicating across worldviews

By describing different assumptions about the nature of the world and how it works, the earlier exposition of worldviews suggested potential for significant misunderstanding between the partners in development. Some writers (e.g. Mitchell and Paras, (2018)¹⁷³) address this as *cognitive dissonance*, where there is discord between the minds of the parties in communication. Mitchell and

¹⁷³ pp. 321f

Paras write also of a cultural disconnect, which could be more than a cerebral issue, embracing the heart as much as the brain, and I suggest the term *cultural dissonance* might also be important. The prospects for ‘talking past each other’¹⁷⁴ would appear to be strong. This section of the thesis considers some communication theories related to international development, and identifies ideas that might frame further discussion of the subject through fieldwork and analysis.

Some authors on communication in international development have written about three different purposes. Mody (2002), for example, writes of ‘three overlapping traditions: information delivery for economic gain, collective resistance, and spiritual awakening and empowerment’ (p. 417), and Steeves (2002) endorses those categories (p. 531). Others have concentrated on the means of communication, with some addressing modern technologies, while still others such as Chambers (e.g. (1994a)¹⁷⁵, and (1994b)¹⁷⁶) have expounded more basic techniques¹⁷⁷.

For this thesis, the first of those Mody goals – marketing, or economic gain – is not relevant. The second goal – resistance and social challenge – is tied up with civil society, political empowerment and similar themes. These are important in some cases and are addressed in this thesis under the heading of *agency*. Mody’s third goal, that of ‘spiritual awakening and empowerment’, is of most direct interest here and is addressed below, initially under the heading of participation.

Participation is promoted by many writers as a key to effective engagement with recipient partners. This aligns with the trend since the 1980s towards bottom-up planning of development programmes. Participation is promoted in both research and practical planning, with the descriptors *participatory action research* (PAR), and *participatory rural appraisal* (PRA) – the latter, in its detail, for rural development although its principles are broader. Rogers and Hart (2002), for example, write about ‘Increasing attention ... given to participatory development’ (p. 11) since the 1980s. Prior to Rogers and Hart (2002), starting in the 1980s, Chambers ((1983) and (1997)) had championed participatory planning in his iconic book *Rural development: Putting the last first* and its sequel *Whose reality counts? Putting the last first*, and in academic journal articles. He popularised the phrase (1994b) ‘handing over the stick’ (p. 1254), which envisaged people in a rural village using a stick to draw plans in dust on the ground, showing their story of what life was like and presenting their own picture of how development might appear. This implied a substantial handing over of power to recipients of development aid in the design of programmes. If done well the outcome will be that, as Gudykunst (1992) says, people will feel ‘respected, affirmed and accepted’ (p. 303). Melkote (2002) wrote of this empowerment as the “‘manifestation of social power at individual, organizational, and

¹⁷⁴ This expression was popularised by Metge and Kinloch’s (1984) book of the same title.

¹⁷⁵ pp. 953f

¹⁷⁶ pp. 1253f

¹⁷⁷ Another useful source is Forester’s (1999), *The deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*.

community levels of analysis''' (p. 431). Chambers' approach was revolutionary in encouraging funders and practitioners to listen to local wisdom, and in doing so to hand power to recipients, as testified also by Rogers and Hart¹⁷⁸. Schech (2014) says 'Some ... theorists see culture as a resource that empowers locally based opposition and alternatives to Western development interventions'. So culture is part of the 'social capital', a 'kind of glue that holds societies together and gives them a coherent structure that can be used for development interventions', something that should be embraced in planning (p. 44).

However Huesca (2002) writes of 'scholars who see participation as either insufficient or problematic in and of itself in terms of altering power relationships in society ... necessary but not sufficient for engaging and altering power relationships.' So participation 'is capable of reproducing inegalitarian power structures' (p. 508). This is not the sort of partnership that this thesis is addressing: while the concepts and techniques can be crucial tools of engagement, they do not in themselves create two-way communication and might become unengaged delegation or even abdication. This is addressed further in chapter 8.

Looking at the point of interest of this thesis, Melkote (2002) wrote: 'the practice of participatory communication has stressed collaboration between the people and experts, a co-equal knowledge-sharing ... and a local context and cultural proximity' (p. 429). 'Collaboration' and 'co-equal knowledge-sharing' is by definition a two-way process. But I would go further and question Melkote's use of the word 'experts' as that denigrates the expertise of recipients in their own cultural and scientific knowledge. I prefer to look at experts as either internal – people commenting on their own culture from inside it – or external – coming from outside the recipient culture. Particularly if development is primarily about social change (as in chapter 2) then local social arrangements are important to development plans and practices, and local people understand best the nuances and implications of those. Raines and Ewing (2006) write about 'bridging the gap' between cultures. In their view 'There's always a bridge' (pp. 66-67), and they provide some practical guidelines for how to cross that bridge. Collaboration, partnership and 'co-equal knowledge-sharing' imply people cross the bridge both ways.

Other writers consider the topics that should be discussed in establishing trusting relationships. Of interest to this thesis is Wilkins' (2002) comment that 'Understanding development as discourse means examining the underlying assumptions [in written, verbal and demonstrated expressions] about the nature of people, problems, and social change' (p. 537). Steeves (2002) writes of the value

¹⁷⁸ Like many good ideas, attempts at grassroots engagement are often not practised well: see for example Lundgren, Persson and Noren (2011), 'There has been much debate and heated arguments ... and a lot of politically correct hypocrisy surrounding this issue' (p. 58). For example there is a need to ensure participation reveals the range of views held by the community, not just by the elite.

of addressing, in communication, 'Nonmaterial considerations of religion and spirituality' (p. 519). Gudykunst (1992) emphasises that 'crossing the bridge' and connecting comfortably and in-depth will take time if the partners are to 'talk about things that are important to us'; if they are to be 'satisfied ... with the communication'; if participants are to reach the important stages of expressing feelings and emotions, and 'self-disclosure, interpersonal attraction, perceived similarities, and uncertainty reduction'. It will require a relationship that is 'personalized and synchronized', rather than based on prior assumptions about the recipient party. Relationships start with assumptions based on 'cultural and sociological data ... [but] as the relationship develops and we gather information about the other person ... we no longer rely on stereotypes to predict the other person's behaviour'. Gudykunst (1992) warns that 'how you think you are coming across to strangers may not be the same as how they perceive your communication with them', as in the phrase 'talking past each other' (pp. 303-306).

In shades of the earlier discussion about proselytising, a number of writers assume social change is an aim of development. Rogers and Hart (2002) write about development studies being 'the study of social change, ... development ... promotes social changes' (pp. 9-10). Wilkins (2002) says that in a development context, one strand of communication is about understanding 'social movements' as a basis for, tool of and outcome of change (p. 542). But, if planning is truly participatory, as Melkote (2002) says, there can be, from the ground-level, 'an alternative paradigm for social change', 'collaborative social action to empower local knowledge and wrest social power inherent in knowledge away from the privileged' (pp. 427, 429). And, further, if planning and execution are truly collaborative, people can cross the bridge, both ways, connecting at a hearts-and-minds level¹⁷⁹ and making a programme a genuine partnership.

Figure 8 depicts three levels of communication that are discussed in the literature: from no attempt to engage, to connecting cerebrally, to a hearts-and-minds connection.

¹⁷⁹ I use the phrase *hearts-and-minds* to describe a strong and trusting relationship resting on emotional and intellectual commitment

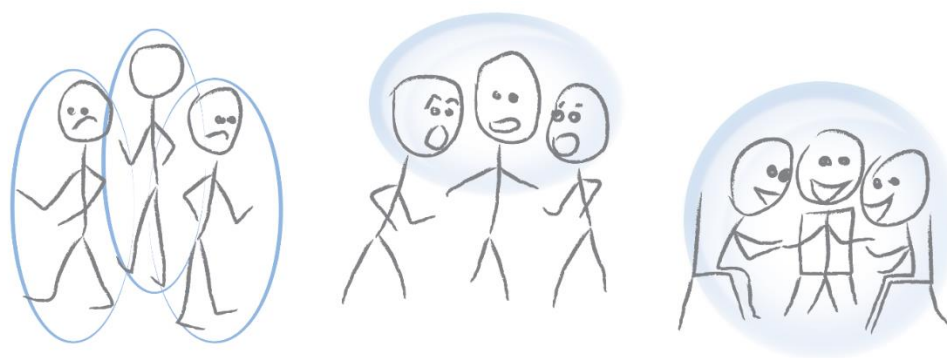


Figure 8: Three levels of communication

3.4 Gaps in literature

From the review of literature and theory in chapters 2 and 3 it is evident that globally there are a number of gaps in our understandings of communication between development groups, or topics where present understandings would benefit from further research. The key items are brought together and summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Gaps in literature

| No. | Gap | Explanation |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | The triangle of relationships between recipient parties, secular development organisations and faith-based organisations, particularly perceptions of their levels of connection | Studies to date address only one side of this triangle at a time, most commonly the secular-donor-to-religious-practitioner leg, or sometimes the recipient-to-donor, or recipient-to-practitioner leg, whereas the dynamics of relationships might include simultaneous assumptions of positions across all three sides. |
| 2. | Fluctuating expectations of secular development organisations regarding engaging with religion, with both recipient and faith-based practitioner parties | There seems to be an ebb and flow in attitudes of secular organisations, depending to some extent on personnel, and changing political and cultural climates. This includes looking at the extent of instrumentality versus intrinsic contributions of religious practitioners to development planning. |
| 3. | The variety of roles and priorities in different FBOs, the relative values they place on evangelism and other aspects of development, and how they include their particular worldviews into development plans | FBOs have continual internal debates over their ethos and roles, with one of the dilemmas being how to include their religiously-informed visions for development in ways that can attract the partnership of secular organisations including donors. |

| No. | Gap | Explanation |
|-----|--|---|
| 4. | The strength of ties and the feedback loops between FBOs and their parent bodies | Many FBOs have been founded by and have some accountability to parent religious organisations. However different understandings of their ethos and priorities can evolve between FBOs and those parent bodies, straining their connections and causing uncertainty in wider development relationships. |
| 5. | Extension of the sociological theory of <i>post-secularity</i> , from its initial focus on activities within the Western world, into the international development industry, and differences between academia and practice | Theoreticians argue that post-secularity is a term that, technically, can only apply in the West, and they write of it within that context. The West, as the major donor and source of practitioners in global development, is unclear how its own wrestlings with the topic affect connections in international development. Recipients, who often assume the West has a secular approach, with the unease that comes with that, would benefit from an explanation of the assumptions of donors and practitioners, and their ability to engage over religion. Study would also increase understanding of barriers to practical implementation. |
| 6. | Enlargement of the concept of <i>transformational development</i> with more robust contributions from non-Christian perspectives | Probably all development organisations hope for transformation of aspects of the worldviews of recipient groups, but the concept of transformational development as an integrated goal has been expounded primarily by Christian agencies. It would be helpful to explore how other organisations, including secular agencies, envisage worldview changes as part of development. |
| 7. | Models of <i>transformational development</i> that can be applied in a participatory and empowering way in development work | Transformational development as currently described has the potential to be a one-way, top-down process, that could be viewed as imperialistic and disempowering. Some practice models, for example with HIV/AIDS and rural hygiene programmes, have reportedly been participatory and empowering, and it would be helpful for these to be documented. This could help clarify approaches to proselytising. |
| 8. | Understanding of proselytising, both secular and religious, including how it is practised, received and perceived across the development sector | This is an emotive issue, expounded with heat as well as light. I suggest a greater proportion of light would help steer a way forward through the issues. |

| No. | Gap | Explanation |
|-----|--|---|
| 9. | Concepts of <i>social control</i> in an international development setting | Social control theory looks a promising approach to understanding and improving cross-cultural communication, but current literature comes mainly from a small stable within the Christian genre. Wider research could be undertaken to add depth and colour to this approach. |
| 10. | Outcomes of development facilitated with religious connection, compared with secular development, including the effectiveness of FBO-enabled development | Writers on religion in development claim potential or actual improved outcomes, compared with secular development programmes. Robust research would cast more light on these claims. |
| 11. | Likely trends in religiosity across the globe, including the depth and extent of religious influence on behaviours, values and hopes | Surveys that have been conducted and predictions that have been made, while useful as a start, make a number of assumptions that could be challenged. These challenges might alter the picture in substantial ways, affecting our understanding of the importance of the research question asked in this thesis. |
| 12. | The ability of local communities to implement development programmes that fit their particular worldviews | Local communities fit within a wide milieu that informs their culture and can affect their autonomy. Most importantly, political structures can constrain or enable local agency. However in recent decades the premise of much writing on development is that local communities will have the freedom to shape their futures according to their own preferences. |
| 13. | New Zealand perspectives on relationships between secular and faith-based development organisations, and in the rest of the triangle of relationships. | There appears to be minimal material published from a New Zealand perspective. With New Zealand's increasing acceptance internally of bi-culturalism, its growing multiculturalism, and its unusually high census professions of 'no religion', we could expect New Zealand might have unique perspectives. |

As described in the start of chapter 1, my own area of interest is on the connections between the partners in development: what I have called the *triangle of relationships*. For this thesis, from the items in Table 3, this relates mainly to gaps No 1, regarding completing the story of the triangle; No 2, regarding the level of comfort secular development organisations have in working with religion; No 5, about extending the theory of *post-secularity* to international development; No 8, on the topic of proselytising; and No 13, on obtaining New Zealand perspectives. The research will address mainly those topics.

Gaps in these areas have been acknowledged by some personal contacts, both regarding the existence of the gaps and the value of researching them. For example, as noted earlier in this chapter, Rakodi¹⁸⁰ (personal communication, 2015) has expressed disappointment at the lack of adoption within DFID of the outcomes of the DFID-funded study through the University of Birmingham, and considers it would be highly beneficial to investigate the nature of that lack and reasons for it. Meneses¹⁸¹ (personal communication, 2015) also endorsed the value of addressing that lack of adoption. Kilpatrick¹⁸² (personal communication, 2015) has been researching issues around effects of worldviews in international relationships, but knows of no one who is addressing the adoption of worldview perspectives into development programmes. Ouweneel¹⁸³ (personal communication, 2015) sees a gap and has given strong encouragement to address my research question as he considers they are potentially important to effective acceptance into government institutions of the body of literature on the theme of faith/ religion/ worldview and development. World Vision International has, through its Melbourne office, commissioned research on related topics through Deakin University in Australia and Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Some of this research considers the processes of winning the confidence and trust of recipient partners who come from different religious perspectives, and there are case studies of successful work. A number of World Vision personnel (personal communications, 2015) have endorsed the value of my research and indicated it would complement well its own commissioned research.

So for the purpose of a PhD research project I have distilled these topics and gaps into the following research question:

To what extent do the differing worldviews of the partners affect their relationships when designing and planning development projects?

This question will shape the remainder of the thesis.

¹⁸⁰ Carole Rakodi is Professor Emeritus at Birmingham University, and led the DFID/ University of Birmingham 2005 to 2010 *Religions and development* study team.

¹⁸¹ Eloise Meneses is Professor of Anthropology at Eastern University, Pennsylvania, USA. She led the *On Knowing Humanity* group which has published a number of papers in this field.

¹⁸² Rob Kilpatrick is a New Zealander who has led a number of mission and development agencies, and has recently finished a PhD in development studies through Auckland University of Technology.

¹⁸³ Evert-Jan Ouweneel works for World Vision as a public engagement advisor on faith & development.

Chapter 4

Methods

The research was intended to discover the extent to which differing worldviews were articulated among the partners and recognised in plans when setting up development projects. This chapter addresses, firstly, a methodological question, it explains how relevant field data were obtained, and it concludes by looking at validation and analysis of the data.

Research covered two categories of questions. Firstly I sought some knowledge of people's worldviews, as a base for addressing the main thesis topic. Then I addressed the main topic where, looking at the work of an organisation or at a particular project, I wanted to discover processes of project design, the extent to which worldviews are discussed or included in project initiation or execution, and the degree of comfort the partners might have with discussing each other's worldviews. Those needs guided the methodology and data collection, and section 4.2.2 develops the questions in more detail.

4.1 Qualitative research

Various writers (e.g. McLennan, McManus & Spoonley (2010)¹⁸⁴) assert that most social research is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This research was almost entirely qualitative. As will be seen in Chapters 5 to 7, I conducted no numerical analyses of data, and the few statistics that are presented were sourced from other writers for the purpose of putting this research into the context of global trends and to consider the significance to the industry of some of my findings.

Qualitative research is characterised by a combination of in-depth investigation of social actions: for example seeking for meanings that people attribute to their actions (McManus, Matthewman, Brickell, McLennan, & Spoonley, 2019) or, in my case, meanings that may have shaped people's actions; looking for causal connections, not just correlations (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, (2006))¹⁸⁵; and exploring a subjective world where people's realities might be social constructs rather than having an objective foundation (Tolich & Davidson, 2011), (McLennan, McManus, & Spoonley, 2010). Tolich and Davidson (2011) summarise some common assumptions in qualitative research, which generally apply to this research project. My main deviation from Tolich and Davidson is that they assume people's realities, including their values and assumptions, have no objective basis (p. 33). In contrast I assume their realities might have an objective basis, but that might be untested,

¹⁸⁴ p. 67

¹⁸⁵ p. 158-159.

and therefore construction of the realities might operate subjectively. While that difference might be important philosophically, it is not significant to this research.

4.2 Data collection

The research question required types of data to be collected that would reveal the influence of worldviews on relationships. To obtain the richness of data that I wanted, including discussing potentially sensitive topics like belief systems and faith, I decided to do one-on-one or small group interviews rather than aim for statistically valid mass survey data. Arising from the review of literature and theory, this thesis adopts, as a main framework for discussion, the three-party typology of the partners in development: recipients, secular organisations and faith-based organisations: see section 2.5, Figure 6 and further discussion in section 4.2.2.

As one base location I wanted a country that had a strongly secular appearance, aligned with Habermas's theory of post-secularism, and for logistic simplicity I chose my home country, New Zealand. For a contrast, and to consider how the theory of post-secularity might extend to international development, I wanted a recipient country that had a more overtly religious or spiritual ethos. This section describes the locations that I chose for data collection; the processes of interviewing, recruitment and questionnaire preparation; and issues with translation for the offshore location.

4.2.1 Locations

To address the range of parties that I wanted, data collection needed to be both at home base, in New Zealand, and offshore. In New Zealand I accessed organisations in both the secular and FBO categories. See further details later in this chapter under *Recruitment*.

The purpose of offshore fieldwork was to inform the thesis through a real-life development situation, as data from recipients were expected to add a range of colours to the views obtained from donors and practitioners in New Zealand. As the projects were in less developed countries and Skype or similar interviews are both unsatisfactory for initial or cross-cultural interviews and technically unreliable, I needed to visit a recipient community in its home site. In planning the fieldwork I then had to make a trade-off between depth of interview and number of projects included. I opted for only one project to enable a more in-depth approach that would not have been possible logistically if more projects had been included.

Ideally I considered the offshore site should be a project that:

- had a broad focus in its development plans, stimulating consideration of a range of worldview factors;

- included a variety of worldviews among its main participants as that would highlight potential issues, either stimulating or suppressing discussion, and adding colour to what could otherwise be a bland over-generalised picture;
- seemed to have goodwill among its partners so as to aid communication and open discussion;
- had been running for a number of years, to enable its people to reflect on progress and influencing factors;
- would grant access to its records and to people to interview, and provide opportunity for me to delve into its direction and management; and
- logistically was accessible and affordable.

From my own work offshore and conversations in the development industry, I was aware of a number of potential projects and programmes, spread across South and South-East Asia, and the Pacific. For reasons given below my first choice was the Chandpur Total Community Development Centre's project (Chandpur TCDC) in southern Bangladesh. Enquiries endorsed progressively both my favouring of the site and permission from gatekeepers.

The Chandpur TCDC¹⁸⁶ operates in 12 villages around the district of Chandpur in southern Bangladesh (see Figure 9). The project started with a baseline survey in 2007. From 2008 to 2014 NZAID¹⁸⁷ was the major funding partner, the rest of the finance being raised by donations from private sources, mainly within New Zealand. The project was initiated by long-term New Zealand Christian missionaries in cooperation with Christian churches in the Chandpur area and with extensive consultation with village people¹⁸⁸. The project was, and still is, supported by BANZAid, the aid and development arm of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, which provides project oversight, is part-funder, and channels other New Zealand funds to the project. The recipients' representative organisation was, and still is, Baptist Aid Bangladesh (BAB), the aid and development arm of the Baptist churches in Bangladesh, which provides project management. At the time of the baseline survey it was considered about 36% of people in the proposed project area lived on less than US\$1

¹⁸⁶ Apart from interviews with managers, project details were taken from various documents retrieved from the BANZAid (n.d.) website, especially Baidya, Munshi, Mitra and Doorey (2008), and Mitra, Doorey and Biswas (2014).

¹⁸⁷ NZAID is the New Zealand government's agency for international development, and operates now within MFAT.

¹⁸⁸ In 2008, at the time the Chandpur TCDC project was approved, the administrators in NZAID (KOHA, 2008) considered the initial baseline survey and other consultation were a 'good practice example' of how these activities should be done. When selecting this project I was aware of that endorsement; and that, plus the issues raised during the project's planning, the processes followed and documentation provided, were among the reasons I selected the project. More details of collaboration during planning were obtained through the research interviews and appear in the results and analysis for this thesis.

per day, and 35% were malnourished. Occupations were described as agriculture, household (mainly unpaid women), fishing, livestock and poultry, small trading, rickshaw or other vehicle pulling, and porter. Adult literacy was 40% and children had 'limited opportunity' for education. Ethnically, the project area was 99% Bengali, with 1.3% Tripura. Religiously, the area was 87% Muslim, 11% Hindu, and 1.8% Christian. Linguistically, Bengali was spoken universally, with Tripura people having, in addition, their own language.

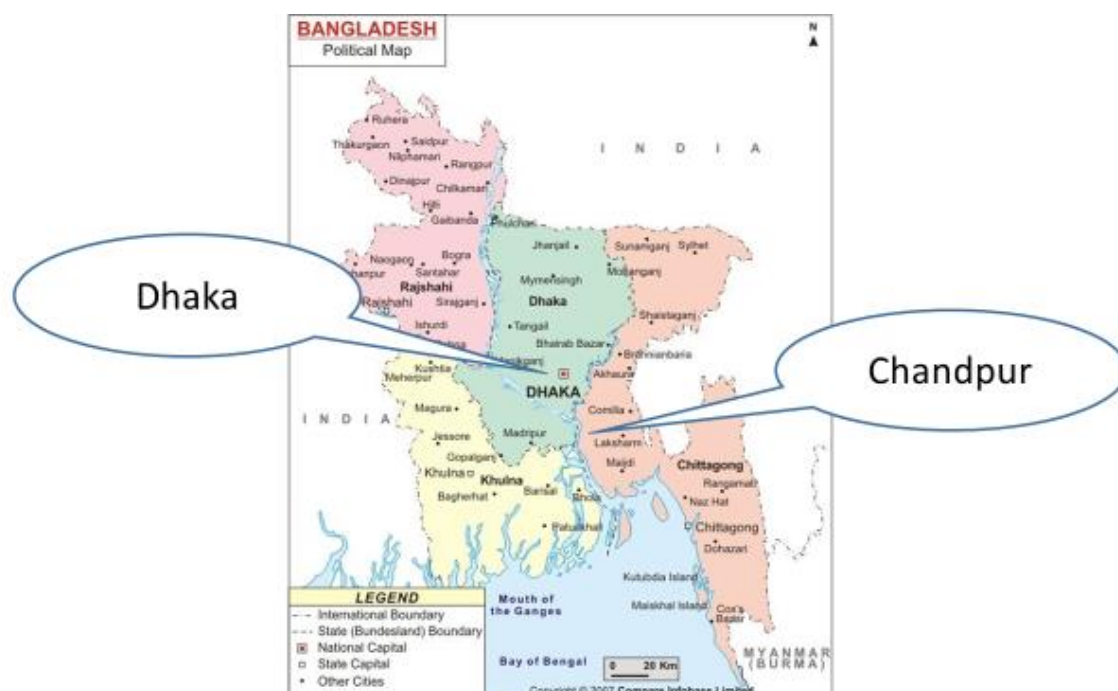


Figure 9: Offshore research location¹⁸⁹

The project recipients have received little direct financial or material aid, with most input being advisory and training expertise. There were five components:

1. education and literacy: addressing preschool, child tutorials and adult literacy;
2. economic development and livelihoods: addressing savings and loan schemes, and livelihood skills;
3. primary healthcare;
4. human rights and gender equality; and
5. environmental care.

When reviewed against the thesis project selection criteria, Chandpur TCDC appealed. It is a comprehensive community project, which has offered a range of development experiences and outcomes to the recipient villagers. It had been under implementation for nearly 10 years so had a

¹⁸⁹ adapted from <https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/320318592220409374/>

significant track record to provide a base for meaningful comment and testing of emerging theoretical concepts. From my career as a project manager I considered it had been managed well including having excellent written records to draw on. Although the major donor had completed its input, the project was still progressing and was likely to continue for some years under local leadership, so there was an active administrative infrastructure to consult. It is in a geographic area that is sufficiently small to be practical to access in the research. As recipients it contains people from a range of subcultures, so was considered likely to offer varying worldviews that might exhibit some cultural variations. It has strong New Zealand connections, as its major donor was the New Zealand government, it was supported by a New Zealand implementing organisation, and there was a development facilitator from New Zealand: these points would improve access to both personnel and records. Prior to confirming this selection I was able to have extensive conversations and correspondence with the New Zealand development facilitator and talk with other New Zealand-based project personnel, and I had visited the site in 2010: all of these simplified the task of gaining cooperation and trust. From exploratory enquiries all New Zealand-based personnel supported using it as a case study¹⁹⁰, and with their support the recipients' organisation was also willing to cooperate, and I was advised that recipients would be agreeable. The project site is readily accessible by public transport from the capital city, Dhaka, accommodation was available at an expatriate mission centre, which itself is within convenient motorbike or CNG¹⁹¹ distance from the recipient communities. Finally, I was advised through various contacts that I would be able to obtain quality interpreters.

4.2.2 Processes

Data collection had two phases: desktop work and fieldwork. Desktop work consisted of obtaining records from a variety of development agencies in New Zealand that address, or might indicate, worldview assumptions of those agencies. Information was obtained initially from webpages of organisations, and later, through telephone calls and interviews. This information covered their mandates, terms of reference, constitutions, cultures, values and ethos that might affect how projects are shaped or implemented. Records consisted of both generic organisation statements and project or programme case studies.

Interviews

Interviews were the sole tool for fieldwork. Sometimes researchers do observations and descriptions of development project sites (e.g. Chambers (1994a)¹⁹² ; Lofland et al. (2006)¹⁹³), but I considered

¹⁹⁰ Yin (2014) provides guidelines for using case studies in research (pp. 200-206). The Chandpur TCDC project fulfils his criteria well. Flyvbjerg (2001) also provides useful guidelines (pp. 66f).

¹⁹¹ A CNG is the local name for a common three wheeler motorbike taxi powered by compressed natural gas, or CNG.

¹⁹² p. 960

¹⁹³ pp. 17-18, 108f

that was more suited to ethnographic studies and was peripheral to my purposes, and that for my work sufficient appreciation of people's worldviews would emerge from interviews. So site observations were omitted.

Regarding the mechanics of interviewing, I took two recorders to all interviews to provide a backup, and made brief handwritten supplementary notes. One recorder was provided by Lincoln University and the other was my mobile phone. For transcribing, the Lincoln University recorder required special software, whereas the mobile phone had matching software available on most modern computers. It proved fortunate to have a backup as, despite the best of care, in two interviews one or other of the recorders did not operate as expected. Each day I downloaded the recordings to a computer and two backup memory sticks. I intended to transcribe all recordings as soon as possible after the recording was made, and do preliminary coding to inform subsequent fieldwork, but see comments under *translation*.

Recruitment

Recruitment was by 'purposive sampling' (Lofland et al., (2006, pp. 91-93)). Extending the discussion in chapter 2, I considered adopting categories on the basis of roles, namely donors and managers. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the common characteristic of both was they were Western organisations who were aiming to deliver development programmes in the less developed world, so the gains from that distinction might be small. Further, some organisations were both donor and manager, and to target those that were distinctly one or the other would limit the field of suitable groups. An alternative grouping was to identify categories based on worldviews, namely secular and faith-based organisations. Preliminary enquiries and the theoretical literature review indicated those two categories would be likely to have markedly different worldviews, and would be more informative for the interest of my thesis. Further, it seemed there would be an adequate number of organisations in each category to provide a reasonable breadth of data. Still looking at recruitment in New Zealand, and anticipating the particular project I planned to use for offshore research, I aimed to include within my dataset organisations that had had a role in the project as they might be able to provide a perspective that would be a counterpoint to the perspectives of the project recipients. In addition to these project-specific people I wanted to talk with some New Zealand-based organisations which had had no association with the project, as they might be expected to have different outlooks on the research question.

Within Bangladesh, in addition to recipients, I wanted to talk with practitioners who had worked on the project and had been connected with the in-country management organisation. Finally, for triangulation, I wanted to add people from within Bangladesh but outside the project, with whom I could review the fieldwork and emerging findings.

As the research methodology was to be primarily qualitative, the number of people interviewed was not important. What was important was to recruit people who would enable me to penetrate into underlying values and attitudes. I wanted to discover organisational views, but the scope of my questions would seek understandings that I expected would go beyond published organisational policies and practices and would ask people to express their own understandings of their organisations' positions. I expected I might also seek their reflections on how their organisation fitted in the spectrum of the development industry, including their perceptions on the broader industry's views on my questions. So I wanted people who were sufficiently embedded in both their organisations and the industry to be able to provide that depth of information.

A number of development organisations focus on tasks of limited scope, such as providing a conduit for sale of ethically produced products, or technical skills for a particular task. My preference was to access organisations that had broad-based community development goals, covering a range of activities and engaging with recipient communities for a number of years. I expected these organisations might have a more articulated and rounded ethos from their collaboration with recipients, including potentially addressing underlying community values, and therefore be more informative for my purposes. That is not to disparage more targeted organisations, but just to note that their work would not necessarily require the same depth of engagement with a recipient community and might therefore not be as useful for my research. However it proved difficult to find secular organisations with a comprehensive approach, and I interviewed some with a more targeted focus. The people I interviewed showed a good understanding of the roles of their organisations and appreciated the value of being aware of wider development issues, and all of them provided useful input to this research.

In New Zealand I used the following processes to obtain interviewees:

- in some development organisations I contacted individuals whom I knew, or knew of, from my own activities in development: that provided four interviews;
- snowball techniques (Lofland et al., p42-43) led me to two further interviewees through contacts of people I knew or interviewed;
- from the list of organisations that are part of New Zealand's CID (n.d.) I searched for those that might have the comprehensive role described above: although there was a limited range of suitable organisations, that approach provided three interview appointments, but one was cancelled when internal restructuring meant the organisation did not have a suitable person at the time I was doing that phase of work;
- as there were few suitable secular organisations with the comprehensive role I preferred, but I still wanted to expand the range and obtain some different perspectives, I selected two other organisations from the CID members; and finally

- I sought an interview with MFAT as that organisation has a key role in New Zealand's development programmes.

I accept that some of those steps opened the possibility of bias: however later in this chapter I have described why I consider the validity of the data is robust.

The organisations that provided interviewees in New Zealand are listed in Table 4. Interviews took place in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington over the latter part of 2016 and early 2017. The organisations I contacted were generally keen to participate, and no organisation refused. The individuals understood they were speaking on behalf of their organisations, even when expressing their own opinions and when going beyond written organisational documents. Their organisations either nominated or were informed beforehand of the participation of these people and the general topics of questions I would ask. I was able to include interviews with people from the three New Zealand organisations that had had, or still have a role in the selected offshore project, and for two of those organisations, I interviewed people who had been their organisation's key home-based agent. For the third, I was not able to access anyone who had worked with the project, but my interviewee was able to supply informative generic comments. To retain confidentiality my reporting of interviews in chapters 5 to 7 does not identify interviewees with their organisations. In total I interviewed in New Zealand eight people from six secular organisations, and eight people from seven FBOs.

To preserve anonymity, as required by research ethics, the thesis uses pseudonyms for the names of interviewees. For New Zealand-based interviews, names came from on-line files of common names in New Zealand, and these are shown in Table 5.

Table 4: Organisations interviewed in New Zealand

| Secular | Faith-based |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Trade Aid | World Vision (two interviews ¹⁹⁴) |
| Oxfam (three people at one interview) | Circuit |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Tranzsend |
| Engineers Without Borders | Banzaid |
| Council for International Development | Individual (former CEO of two FBOs) |
| Sole agent | Sole agent |
| | Retired |

¹⁹⁴ World Vision provided two interviews. The first was intended as a pilot interview, and the second as the official thesis interview but, by agreement with the interviewee, the initial one was reclassified as a full interview. By snowballing, that interview led to a contact in another location with a specialist in my topic.

Table 5: New Zealand based interviewees

| Pseudonym | Type of organisation |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Albert | faith-based |
| Anna | secular |
| Daniel | secular |
| Jackson | faith-based |
| Jessica | secular |
| Max | faith-based |
| Megan | secular |
| Michael | faith-based |
| Nathan | secular |
| Oliver | faith-based |
| Richard | faith-based |
| Rosa | faith-based |
| Sam | faith-based |
| Sarah | secular |
| Sophie | secular |
| Timur | secular |

When planning their fieldwork some researchers recommend a preliminary field visit before the main data gathering exercise. The importance of this step and practical advice on its execution are explained by Caine, Davison and Stewart (2009), and my initial plans included a preliminary visit. The purpose of such a visit is to improve plans for the main fieldwork programme. Despite potential advantages, and because of timing constraints, limitations on funding and personal factors affecting both me and key individuals on site, a preliminary visit proved impractical. This omission was compensated to a degree by my knowledge of the project through a previous visit: over a few days in 2010 I had accompanied my wife who had a pastoral care role with a team member. Entry was also helped by my acquaintance, through work in New Zealand and South East Asia, with the in-country programme manager; and by other contacts that developed with key individuals on site during the planning stages. While there are dangers through these prior relationships, as discussed in section 4.4, I consider the nett effect was beneficial in opening doors and facilitating conversations. All interviews occurred during a single visit in January and February 2017, when I spent five weeks in Bangladesh, comprising four weeks in Chandpur and one in the capital, Dhaka.

For offshore recruitment I endeavoured to obtain a cross section of community demographics as I wanted the opportunity, within the scope of this project, to hear a range of opinions. Interviewees included both those who had chosen to participate in the development project and some who had refrained. I interviewed roughly even numbers of women and men. I intended to interview about 30 people in and around the recipient community as I expected this would provide a sufficient range of insights for my purposes: this is a similar order of sample size to many qualitative research

projects¹⁹⁵. Village interviewees came from four out of the twelve villages in the project. I chose these villages for accessibility, but with an emphasis on people of Tripura ethnicity as they had been identified in pre-project planning as one of the poorer parts of the community and had been the project's initial target group. Apart from that Tripura emphasis, project staff advised there was no significant demographic distinction between the villages. In addition to project recipients, I planned to interview people, both Bangladeshi and ex-patriate, who were a step back from the coalface. These included managers or initiators of the project, and also people who had had no involvement with the project but who could provide reflections on the views I was hearing.

Eventually I interviewed 20 villagers. After about twelve village interviews I was obtaining fairly similar opinions that were adding little new relevant information, and I considered the views of some people from outside the project would provide more value than interviewing a large number of villagers. Regarding the sequencing of interviews, my fourth and seventh interviews were with non-villagers, and their reflections provided useful insights that reshaped my next village interviews. That was serendipitous in that the pattern of a few village interviews followed by an external reflective interview proved a useful sequence for the remainder of my time in the Chandpur villages. Table 6 shows the demographics of the interviewees and Figure 10 shows a typical village interview setting.

Similar to interviews done in New Zealand, the requirement for anonymity led, in writing this thesis, to the use of pseudonyms for the names of interviewees. For Bangladeshi interviewees I used names from the national women's and men's cricket teams of 2017, as shown in Table 7.

Table 6: Demographics of Bangladesh interviewees

| Category | Descriptor | | | | Numbers |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Gender | Ethnicity | Religious identity | Political role | |
| Villager/ recipient | 11 female | ~ 10 Tripura | 13 Muslim | 2 village leaders | 20 |
| | 9 male | ~ 10 Bengali | 4 Christian 3 Hindu | 18 other participants | |
| Project management | | | | | 8 |
| External commentator | | Bangladeshi | | | 2 |
| | | expatriate | | | 2 |
| Total | | | | | 32 |

¹⁹⁵ Mason (2010) provides a helpful review of sample sizes in qualitative research.



Figure 10: Village interview

Questionnaires

In the questionnaires I wanted to cover two categories. The first was lead-in questions to seek descriptions of the worldviews of the interviewees or, where they represented an organisation, the worldviews of their organisations. This was to lay a foundation for addressing the thesis question. The next category was addressing the thesis question: looking at the work of the organisation or project, I sought to discover the processes of project design, the extent to which worldviews were discussed or included in project initiation or execution, and the degree of comfort the partners might have had with discussing each other's worldviews. While exact questions were tailored to each of the groups of partners, and modified for subgroups such as different villages, individuals, and organisations, all participants were invited to consider both categories of questions.

Table 7: Interviewees in Bangladesh

| Pseudonym | Descriptor |
|-----------|----------------------|
| Anwar | Villager |
| Arafat | Villager |
| Dina | Villager |
| Eliab | Project manager |
| Ella | External commentator |
| Fahima | Villager |
| Fardin | Villager |
| Farhad | Villager |
| Imrul | Project manager |
| Jahanara | Project manager |
| Josh | Project manager |
| Kalam | Project manager |
| Kwan | Villager |
| Labiba | Villager |
| Lata | Villager |

| | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| Mehedi | Villager |
| Mosharraf | Project manager |
| Nasir | Villager |
| Nazmul | Project manager |
| Panna | Villager |
| Pradeep | Villager |
| Rafi | Villager |
| Ritu | Villager |
| Rumana | Villager |
| Saiful | External commentator |
| Salma | Villager |
| Sanjida | Project manager |
| Shakib | External commentator |
| Shalia | Villager |
| Sharmin | Villager |
| William | External commentator |
| Yasha | Villager |

More specifically, building on the review of literature and theory, earlier discussions with practitioners, and my own experience, themes included: What was the nature of the worlds the different parties assumed, and what were their assumptions of their partners' worldviews? How important did they think these assumptions were to the partner group or to the project? How much did the parties clarify each other's assumptions when setting up or implementing projects, and how were these recognised in project documents or activities? What level of rapport did they want or aim to achieve? Conversely, what limitations or blockages existed to open sharing of values and visions? Were there desirable project outcomes that related uniquely to each partner's worldview? While not being presented in those terms in interviews, those themes shaped the interview questions.

Given the methodology was qualitative, interviews ranged widely. I wanted to explore particular issues, so some structure was required. But interviews also allowed flexibility, as I wanted to elicit people's individual experiences and reflections in some depth, the meanings they attached to their situations and actions, and worldview assumptions behind them. The interviews were therefore semi-structured. Lofland et al. (2006) describe semi-structured interviews as 'involving the use of an interviewing guide consisting of a list of open-ended questions that direct conversation without forcing the interviewee ... to select pre-established responses' (p. 17).

For the content of questionnaires Lofland et al. (2006) describe eight potential subjects: type of topic, frequencies, magnitudes, structures, processes, causes, consequences, and agency (pp. 144-145). My interest was mainly in the last five of these, but investigating them required addressing all the others to a degree. For the format of questionnaires I accessed a number of examples and templates. Five of these were: a half-page general 'model' for worldview analysis in Hiebert (2008);

seven pages of a draft questionnaire in Kilpatrick (personal communication)¹⁹⁶, which are mainly about religiosity of people in the context of development projects; two questionnaires, of eight and nine pages, in Moore (2011) looking at spirituality of coastal recreation participants in New Zealand; and a semi-structured interview outline I had used previously in New Zealand in a pilot study of non-Western worldviews. With these in the background I prepared my own forms for this project.

Under the two overarching categories I listed questions that I wanted to explore, as in Table 8, shown in two tiers.

As a third tier I initially prepared fairly detailed questionnaire forms. Around the topics in Table 8, I typically had a master sheet that I kept tabled throughout the interviews, with more concrete questions and prompts to be called on if required. In preparing for interviews with people from institutions I researched the target organisations by accessing their own published information, usually on-line webpages or through a preliminary phone call or personal contacts. This research modified any generic outline questions, and informed my detailed questioning. As interviewing progressed and I improved proficiency I used the prompts less. Later interviews became both more focused, reflecting a clearer perception of the points of interest; and wider ranging, spontaneously, when discussion seemed relevant to the main research questions.

Table 8: Interview questionnaire sample outline

| Topic | Themes |
|---|--|
| Worldviews of interviewees: | Supreme beings and spiritual forces, and their interactions with the world |
| clarify whether talking of interviewees' own worldviews and/ or those of their community or organisation | Relationships between humanity and the rest of the natural world, including physical environment |
| | Political and decision-making structures and protocols |
| | Individual versus communal orientation of people and societies |
| | The future of humanity, and how a person or organisation interacts with that future |
| The process of project design: | Values or outcomes that are important as goals of a development project |
| especially the ways in which worldviews were identified and/ or included in the project or organisation's procedures | How worldviews are reflected in those values and outcomes, and in project design |
| | How values and worldviews are discussed in planning and implementing a project |

¹⁹⁶ Draft paper (2013) *Why worldview is the compelling issue*

Empathy with and tolerance of people or partners with different worldviews

Any changes that might have occurred over the course of a project in people's willingness to discuss values and worldviews

To clarify the questions and refine the techniques I conducted three interviews that were set up as pilots¹⁹⁷, and that seemed enough to develop a satisfactory interview structure and content. These interviews were with one person in each of: a faith-based development organisation, a secular development organisation, and an ethnic group that, while living in New Zealand, was similar to the offshore target community. In both of the organisational cases, while the structure of the interviews could have been improved, they successfully revealed material that would be useful for the research. A revised interview format would not materially alter the information these people supplied, and in both cases the interviewees were willing for me to use the recordings as part of the research database. The pilots taught me two main things. The first was that the interviews needed to be flexible, at times deviating widely from a notional outline to allow fluency in responses and in-depth exploration of ideas. The second was that many interviewees could find it difficult to present a coherent account of their worldview, particularly of the connections between their philosophical foundations and practical project actions. It appeared this would be especially so in cultures where, in contrast to Western English-speakers, people emphasise concrete and spiral thinking rather than conceptual and linear thinking, and where language is dominated by nouns rather than verbs (Silzer, personal communication, 2017; Pengsun and Aimiao (2013)¹⁹⁸). As the details of people's worldviews were not the subject of the research, I decided it would be acceptable to abbreviate and simplify those questions. In practice, when interviewing recipient villagers through an interpreter, this simplification had to be taken a step further because of difficulties with language. However, having said that, in later interviews aspects of people's worldviews often emerged spontaneously, and I found it easier to elicit information with more specific questions in the context of practical project actions than as an initial and somewhat abstract interview topic. That fits with Pengsun and Aimiao's (2017), and Silzer's (2017) views of different cultures. So the ease with which people were able to articulate the connection between spiritual beliefs and project plans and actions, which was a

¹⁹⁷ 'A pilot interview is intended ... as an aid to the design of later research. ... Pilot interviews are of two sorts. The first is 'exploratory' and is an initial attempt to see if the subject being investigated is adequately (or potentially adequately) captured by the proposed interview procedure and schedule of questions. This is more aptly called a pre-pilot. Second, is the complete pilot, which is a small-scale implementation of the complete research plan including data collection, analysis and outline report. The idea is to see whether the full-scale research that is proposed will actually investigate what it is intended to. Problems with wording of questions, interview techniques, coding, data analysis and the matching of intentions with available data are sorted out at this stage before considerable resources are committed for the full-scale research' (Harvey, 2019)

¹⁹⁸ p. 8

main topic in the interviews, might have been influenced by cultural thinking processes and interview language as well as people's interest or aptitude.

4.2.3 Translation

For both interviewing and transcribing, offshore work required the use of interpreters and translators¹⁹⁹. Obtaining these services required persistence. For field interpretation, Bangladeshi contacts in Christchurch advised of people, generally students or relations, who might be suitable and available. These might have had advantages in proficiency and independence, but they would have had the disadvantage of living in other parts of the country, generally Dhaka or Chittagong, with logistic and cost issues in having them on-site for an intermittent work schedule. Long term expatriate contacts in Bangladesh advised there would be likely to be suitable people available in Chandpur, who would know the locality and whose English would be adequate or better. I opted for the latter.

The job of the field interpreter was to provide an interpretation service while I was in the field conducting research interviews. I asked for two key skills: (1) being able to speak fluently and easily in both Bangla and English; and (2) being a facilitator of discussion, to enable in-depth engagement between the interviewee and me. Apart from interpretation, the task also included assisting in managing practical details, including helping arrange interviews, finding interview locations, enabling me to keep my appointments, managing introductions, advising on cultural practices, and helping ensure safe and healthy travel. Local people who knew my hosts advised on suitable rates of pay. However when I arrived on site the interpreter my hosts had had in mind was not available, and I had to seek people from among their circles of contacts. I was advised that, as Chandpur was not a popular tourist destination²⁰⁰, there would be few people available who would have the language skills required. Initially two people were offered. The first was the site manager of the target project, who was available immediately. The disadvantage of his role in the project and hence non-neutrality when in interviews was a significant drawback. The second was a school teacher, who expressed his willingness to help, but his availability was limited as his employer was reluctant to release him. I met both people and, given availabilities, I selected the site manager, and I briefed and trained him on my expectations. This person had an advantage in knowing the people and places, and being able to arrange appointments easily. He also had his own motor-bike transport, and was

¹⁹⁹ I generally use the term *interpreter* for the service of verbal translation during an interview, and *translator* or *transcriber* for the subsequent service of transcribing the recorded text to a written record. The former requires greater skills of empathy and quick paraphrasing, and the latter demands more the skills of accuracy of translation. See, for example <http://www.languagescientific.com/the-difference-between-translation-and-interpreting/>, retrieved 14 August 2017.

²⁰⁰ At one point during my time on site I was advised I was one of only two white faces in a district of a million people.

able to take me by pillion. His interpretation proved adequate and provided what I needed, despite discovering, at transcription stage, more miscommunications than I had been aware of during the interviews. However, after five interviews his employer, at short notice, relocated him to another part of the country and the school teacher alternative was then confirmed as unavailable. Further consultation with local contacts uncovered a third person, a part-time school tutor, whom I interviewed, trained and engaged. He also proved adequate. He needed extra help with locating people to interview, and for that he and I were able to obtain advice via mobile phone from the relocated project site manager. His neutrality, in having no previous involvement in the project, was an advantage, and I retained his services until I finished my work in Chandpur. Through a desire to help, both interpreters strayed from their role and sometimes tried to provide answers themselves, instead of eliciting the interviewees' views, but generally I was aware of this during the interviews and was able to seek the interviewees' own views. They also tried sometimes to tell participants what they should say but, for occasions where I was not aware of that during interviews, the transcripts revealed the debates and discussions, exposing the interviewees' views.

Obtaining transcription services also became a convoluted process. The job was similar to the in-field interpreter, but I required greater skills in written English. Again, my New Zealander host connected me with local people who advised on suitable rates of pay. I wanted to have the transcripts produced within a few days of each interview so I could review the content and return if necessary to the interviewees for further discussion. This proved impossible as it took until half way through the Chandpur fieldwork to locate, through my host and his contacts, a woman who they considered was suitable. Her language skills were advanced and her relevant experience was impressive. She would have provided an excellent service as an interpreter but, with a young child, she was not available to go into the field and, further, there would have been issues of cultural propriety to address – not insurmountable but an additional complication – in having us travel together in a CNG²⁰¹. I engaged her for transcribing but, after delays in receiving completed transcripts, I discovered she had contracted a long term illness and would not be available after all. By that time I had almost finished my interviewing in Chandpur and I was clearly not going to be able to have transcripts in time to consider re-interviewing. That opportunity would have been in the nice-to-have category rather than essential. For a transcriber the fall-back position was that I had a reasonable expectation of obtaining help through my contacts when back in New Zealand. In the end a New Zealander who is based at home but who works part-time on translation work in Bangladesh, was able to broker an in-country transcriber for me. That transcriber also proved adequate. My New

²⁰¹ Bangladeshi contacts in New Zealand had advised that it would be helpful to have a female or young male interpreter as a culturally safe way to talk with women, but practicalities of obtaining an interpreter required some compromises. The public nature of village interviews reduced concerns over cultural propriety.

Zealand-based contact also transcribed some interviews and provided a quality review for the Bangladeshi transcriber.

In my agreements with interpreters and transcribers, confidentiality was an ethical requirement, similar to my own as researcher. But as noted below in section 4.4, under *Ethics*, because of the public nature of the interviews, this became a somewhat artificial condition.

Finally, it might be worth noting that the processes of obtaining interpretation and transcription services mirrored the real-life situation when trying to communicate at the planning stage of development projects, and it could be argued that this increased the authenticity of my work.

4.3 Researcher role

One issue to be aware of is whether a researcher is an insider or an outsider. Lofland et al. (2006) describe an insider as a 'known investigator', someone who is starting from where they are, doing research in their own 'nest'. Whereas an outsider is an 'unknown investigator', a newcomer to the setting of their research (pp. 35, 41). Lofland et al. encourage ethnographic researchers to be increasingly and consciously insiders, 'observers and participants in the lives of the people being studied'. They assert that 'a great many aspects of social life can be seen, felt, and analytically articulated only in this manner', that a 'sustained presence' in the research setting is the only way researchers can be 'living and feeling' (p. 3) their subjects' lives. They explain an insider position is likely to 'increase the prospect of asking some of the right questions' (pp. 41-46). Anderson (2006) presents an outsider, a detached observer, as an outdated colonial approach, and considers 'contemporary anthropologists would frequently be full members of the cultures they studied' (p. 376). An advantage of being an insider 'is that it gives the researcher an added vantage point for accessing certain kinds of data'. As a downside, Anderson acknowledges a risk that insiders might simply document their own experiences, and interpret these through their own biases²⁰²; this is addressed later in this chapter in section 4.5.

In my work I was both insider and outsider. I was an insider in that I have worked in the aid and development industry, for both secular organisations and FBOs, and am currently on an advisory panel for a small international development NGO. I was an insider to the Christian FBOs in that my own worldviews align closely with many aspects of theirs, and I wrestle with issues that they also wrestle with. I was an insider to secular organisations in that I have a degree in Western science and technology, for most of my career I have worked for secular organisations, including in international development, and I have lived and operated with secularity's assumptions and methods. One surprise was the extent to which I was accepted as an insider by people of faiths other than

²⁰² pp. 376, 386-389

Christianity, in that many of my overseas interviewees felt a high degree of affinity towards anyone who practices a religion: this topic appears in depth later in this thesis. I was an insider in that I am a minor financial supporter for some of the organisations I researched; in that a few years ago I worked for one of CID's member organisations; in that in 2010 I visited the overseas project where this present research took me; and in that I had known previously some of the people I interviewed, and had worked briefly with one²⁰³.

I was an outsider in that I have no direct involvement in any of the projects we discussed during interviews. I was an outsider in that most of the people I interviewed were not acquainted with me and in that I had not worked previously with anyone from most of the organisations I interviewed. I was an outsider in that all the village interviewees, and some of the other people I interviewed in Bangladesh, were of another ethnicity, language and culture; and that, with only five weeks in Bangladesh, I would have remained an outsider to these people. I was an outsider in that I am a white Westerner who has a level of material comfort, access to resources, and levels of autonomy that are beyond the reach of perhaps all the village interviewees.

Overall I consider that the degree of insider-ness that I had was beneficial and, while a longer time in Bangladesh, particularly for the village interviews, would have undoubtedly enhanced my ability to explore their views in depth, there was enough for the needs of this research project. Particularly beneficial was my affinity with FBOs. With them, this made the research approach the level of participatory action²⁰⁴, and enabled an immediate rapport and an ability to sense nuances that other researchers might have missed, including knowing where to explore possible underlying assumptions.

4.4 Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by Lincoln University's Human Ethics Committee. The main ethical issues related to sampling techniques, to ensure the academic integrity of the research and any conclusions; possible coercion of participants; potential cultural offence or physical risk to participants; preservation of anonymity and confidentiality of participants; and how the data would be used in publications including after the research was concluded.

Some changes in expectation on styles of interviews occurred in Bangladesh villages. One ethical requirement was that confidentiality and anonymity of participants would be ensured. However

²⁰³ See further comments above under *Recruitment*. My financial support was not mentioned during interviews, nor in arranging them. For most of those organisations my support is anonymous and indirect, through an agent.

²⁰⁴ Lofland et al. (2006) describe participatory action as 'social research in which the people being studied ... have substantial control over and participation in the research' (p. 65). Anderson (2006) uses the term 'self-narrative' (p. 385) in a similar sense.

before I arrived at the site of the chosen project I was advised that our expectations on confidentiality would not match Bangladeshi culture. Most interviews with villagers were conducted in the open air, usually with uninvited guests sitting in for part of the time or strolling past, and often contributing to the discussions, sometimes with lengthy debates with the nominal interviewees. This had some negative consequences. One was that occasionally there were multiple simultaneous conversations, which made the interpreter's job difficult and provided recordings that were challenging to transcribe. Another was that it could be argued that the nominal interviewee might have been inhibited by the presence of others: for example in some group interviews one person played a dominant role, and I felt that a few questions directed to the quieter participants brought mild choruses of affirmation that seemed to lack independence. However, a positive outcome was that the information gathered from group participation seemed generally to provide something approaching a communal consensus in views, and brought out shades in answers that added positively to the discussions. I also felt that the vigour of argument in the background debates indicated that individual views were not generally suppressed, and those communal debates were transcribed where practical. The public nature of the interviews also helped eliminate concerns over the respectability of two men – myself and my interpreter – interviewing a woman in private. Another practical consideration is that there was no place in villages where it would have been possible to conduct a confidential interview as people live close together and houses have thin walls offering minimal sound-proofing. It would have been possible, although difficult, to obtain privacy by taking interviewees offsite. But the comfort of being on their home turf was probably helpful in obtaining more open responses from the villagers. Even with offsite interviews, advisors considered the local culture would lead to interviewees being questioned extensively when they returned home, and that would have been likely to uncover the content of the interviews. My conclusion was that, on balance, the public nature of the interviews had more positive aspects than negative, and that, provided anonymity is preserved in any written outputs, there were no challenges to the research project's ethical protocols. Opinions could potentially be broadcast by the participants or spectators, but that would be their choice and would not breach any ethical expectations or undertakings.

4.5 Validation and limitations

To validate qualitative research various authors²⁰⁵ use terms like trustworthiness, transferability, authenticity, credibility, believability, coherence and plausibility. Polkinghorne (2007) writes that

‘the purpose of the validation process is to convince the readers of the likelihood that the support for the claim is strong enough that the claim can serve as a basis for understanding of and action in the human realm’,

²⁰⁵ e.g. Bowen (2006), Creswell and Miller (2000), Polkinghorne (2007), and Tolich and Davidson (2011)

and 'Readers should be able to follow the presented evidence and argument enough to make their own judgement as to the relative validity of the claim' (pp. 476-477).

One method of satisfying these requirements is through triangulation, 'where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information' (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

Another method, and what Creswell and Miller indicate is potentially the most powerful, is what they call 'member checking', that is 'taking data and interpretations back to the participants ... so they can confirm the credibility'. They also advocate collaboration and peer review, establishing an audit trail for validation steps, and a declaration of the researcher's own position and assumptions (pp. 126-129). As noted earlier (see section 4.3) Anderson (2006)²⁰⁶ raises a risk over the objectivity of research by an insider, and his recommended mitigation was to explore the observations and interpretations of others. A more subjective method suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000) is to provide a 'thick description', a story that seems to a reader to be authentic, by whatever criteria the reader uses. These authors explain a thick description as:

statements that produce for the readers the feelings that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study. Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who ... are transported into a setting or situation. [The aim is to] contextualize the people or sites studied ... locating individuals in specific situations; ... bringing a relationship or an interaction alive ...; or providing a detailed rendering of how people feel (pp. 128-129)²⁰⁷

This section of the thesis, coupled with section 4.5, provides the 'audit trail' that Creswell and Miller advocated above.

The main method of validation of fieldwork was triangulation. The initial interviews in New Zealand covered five organisations in each of the secular and faith-based categories. In Bangladesh, in addition to 20 villagers, I interviewed people whom I have called 'external commentators' (Table 7), that is, people who were external to the project I visited, and were either Bangladeshi people or long term expats. In part that was because my interpreters' lack of English language fluency limited my ability to explore villagers' views, but also because these commentators were people who could critique the village responses and the inferences I was drawing from them. It was helpful that a former site project manager visited the location while I was doing the fieldwork and he was able to provide another perspective to add to that of the current site project manager. Then after the Bangladesh visit I interviewed three further people from other field situations to test emerging ideas.

²⁰⁶ pp. 386-389

²⁰⁷ Geertz (1973) popularised the expression 'thick descriptions' but focused on the actor rather than the reader. To Geertz thick descriptions were observations of people's actions, placed in their cultural context in a way that showed the meaning of the action to the actor (pp. 310-323).

The results chapters record the interview outcomes regarding closeness of connection between the parties. Those chapters will show that recipients, FBOs and external commentators largely supported each other on the key findings. However, the self-perceptions of secular organisations regarding their connection with recipients differed from the views of recipients, FBOs and external commentators. From the histories and different philosophical assumptions of the parties, as presented in chapter 2, those conflicting perceptions are not unexpected. So I consider the triangulation process provided a highly credible and coherent base to aid understandings of relationships in international development and to apply post-secular theory in that field.

Other validation actions listed in a paragraph above included member checking, where I reflected on my emerging findings with two FBO interviewees. Regarding collaboration, I am constantly interacting with people in the development industry, including discussing issues related to this thesis. Peer reviews have come through conference presentations and seminars²⁰⁸, including with people from Asia and Africa, and in one-on-one conversations with practitioners and cultural experts. Regarding ‘thick descriptions’, I assembled a number of stories and anecdotes that corroborate the substance of much of the findings. All these steps have endorsed strongly the thesis findings, although a minority of people expressed a caution against over-stating polarisation of views. These steps should also satisfy Anderson’s (2006) concerns (section 4.3) about the objectivity of a researcher who is a partial-insider.

One notable feature of this thesis, which could be considered relevant to the matter of validity, is that the greatest weight of material, in both extent and depth, came from FBOs. This imbalance will be apparent in the results chapters and is addressed further in chapter 8. I consider the reason for the imbalance of rich material is likely to be because FBO personnel were more aware of their views and the effects and implications of them, than were secular organisations and recipients. As will be shown in chapter 5, secular interviewees seemed to be unaware of their views, and villager interviewees also had difficulty expressing their worldviews and implications of them. Regarding recipients, language differences created a barrier but my interpreter seemed able to understand well my questions and discussion, and was working with villagers in his mother tongue. The lack of feedback seemed to be more from lack of comprehension of issues. So it is possible that both villagers and Western secularists, through lack of contact with or challenge from alternative views, might be living what Socrates is quoted as calling ‘an unexamined life’ (Famakinwa, 2012). In contrast I consider, subject to further fieldwork, that the ability of FBO interviewees – both those for whom English was their first language, and those for whom it was a second or third language – to

²⁰⁸ Conferences and seminars have included: an Engineers Without Borders (EWB) seminar, (Lewthwaite, 2014); Lincoln University post-graduate conference (Lewthwaite, (2017)); DevNet conference, (Lewthwaite, Fisher, and Rennie, (2018)); and Laidlaw College (Lewthwaite, Fisher, and Rennie, (2019)).

articulate their worldviews and implications of those was a reflection of their understanding of the effects of worldviews.

A further topic for this section of the thesis is a question arising from the duration of the offshore fieldwork. That phase took five weeks, and that is shorter than recommended by both ethnographers and development practitioners. As Creswell and Miller (2000) explain, 'Being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data ... ethnographers, for example, spend from 4 months to a year at a site' (p. 128).²⁰⁹ To reinforce that for this research, one issue was identified in section 4.3.3, regarding the difficulties of obtaining a suitable transcription service, leading to an inability to return to village participants to review their contributions. So fieldwork that is too brief increases the risk of superficial or misleading responses and misinterpretation of the data. In response to these concerns I note that, for this thesis, the research question was not about ethnography, and the purpose of the fieldwork was not to provide an in-depth ethnographic profile. Rather, within the logistic limits of a PhD research project, the fieldwork was intended to elicit data that shed light on multi-party communications and connections. Further, the research drew on the experience of people whom I have called external commentators, who were either members of the recipient culture or had spent extended times in that culture: the practical effect of this was to extend through teamwork the period of time immersed in the culture. As discussed above, various validation steps contribute to confidence in the data for the purpose of this thesis.

One particular area for concern was the credibility of village interviews. One Bangladeshi commentator said of the villagers: 'they are trying to please you', and explained that, in keeping with social patronistic structures and a legacy of British colonial rule, villagers would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. As another Bangladeshi explained (see section 5.1.2), his culture values relationships above truth. Some considered that cultural tendency was diminishing in favour of a more Western style. A different Bangladeshi commentator considered the crucial test was whether I had any authority over my interviewees, that is, whether I was in the position of patron (see section 5.1.2). The fact that I was not a patron, and therefore, in their perception, could not affect their lives, would incline them to tell me the truth. My position as an educated and, to them, wealthy foreigner would not alter that. Some foreigners disagreed with this, tending to support the other Bangladeshi views. A telling point came during my Bangladesh village interviews. As discussed in section 6.2, villagers had been providing bland assertions of tolerance of people of a variety of religions and, given this reputation for people to say what they thought I wanted to hear, I had been suspicious of the positive answers. The break came when I started asking: 'What would you say if development workers who came to you had no religion?' The strong and spontaneous rejection of

²⁰⁹ See also Burawoy (2000) and Caine, Davison, and Stewart (2009, p. 492)

that idea appeared to be an unrehearsed and untailored gut reaction, and that response was repeated almost without exception in my remaining interviews. That indicated to me that the villagers were giving me their real thoughts on that point. An additional argument, as in section 4.4, that increases confidence came from the logistics of the village interviews. The interviews were conducted in public spaces, sometimes with two or three interviewees, and in the presence of passers-by. Before answering me the interviewees sometimes debated their views vigorously among themselves and with passers-by; and not just the answers conveyed to me through the interpreter, but also the group arguments were recorded and transcribed later as far as possible. So I considered I obtained genuine reflections of the villagers' views.

A further question is whether FBO interviewees could be accused of bragging, regarding the good reputation of Christians and Christian missions in Bangladesh. The Christian FBO people and missionaries who I talked with claimed the widespread favourable opinion that people expressed of Christians in the Chandpur TCDC area was real, deserved and unusual. They explained that, in other places, a complication to reputations is that all Westerners are assumed to be Christian, regardless of their religious affiliations or lack of them, and regardless of their behaviours, and all Westerners therefore contribute to the image of what it means to be a Christian. As one local commentator said regarding Bangladeshi people, 'that is their ignorance' to bundle together donors, foreigners, Christians and white people. However Chandpur was away from main commercial and tourist destinations, so local people had met few Westerners, and those whom they had met were mainly missionaries and Christian development workers who had demonstrated care for local people and had maintained good ethical practices. The district had been spared the influx of other Westerners whose lifestyles and values offend local standards. Addressing the credibility of these claims, and using triangulation again, the self-congratulatory comments of FBOs aligned well with those of villagers and external non-Christian Bangladeshi commentators. So there are plausible reasons to accept the Christian claims of their own good reputation, and the resulting rapport between recipients and FBOs.

One limitation of this research is that, in the recipient community, the thesis addresses relationships with the primary recipients of development projects, in this case rural villagers. It is not addressing directly relationships at the higher governance levels such as national administrations, where presenting issues are likely to be different. That is not to say the discoveries in this research will not apply to higher levels, as personal relationship issues could well be generic, but simply that that level was not considered in this research.

When considering the soundness of theoretical conclusions and universalising the outcomes of my research, some limitations in my database are acknowledged in Table 9, with responses. Most of the limitations in Table 9 are inherent in qualitative research but the limitations are compensated for by

advantages in the in-depth explorations of meaning that qualitative research provides. Earlier in this section of this chapter I addressed the matter of validity of data supplied by the particular groups, organisations or people interviewed.

Another limitation came from our abilities to communicate meaning. As in section 4.2.2, regarding questionnaires, the difficulty many people had in articulating spiritual beliefs and the connection of those beliefs with project plans and actions might have been influenced by cultural thinking processes and interview language fluency as well as people's interest or aptitude. Polkinghorne (2007) helpfully presents the following regarding the limits of validity in recorded narratives:

The disjunction between a person's actual experienced meaning and his or her storied description has four sources: (a) the limits of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning, (b) the limits of reflection to bring notice to the layers of meaning that are present outside awareness, (c) the resistance of people because of social desirability to reveal fully the entire complexities of the felt meanings of which they are aware, and (d) the complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a co-creation of the interviewer and participant (p. 480).

To that list I would add: (e) practical difficulties from language fluency, cultural barriers, and unclear recordings. While Polkinghorne (2007) was writing about narratives, the same would apply to the semi-structured interviews of this research. These concerns are acknowledged, and are addressed above, including use of processes recommended by Polkinghorne.

Table 9: Limitations of research database

| Limitation | Response |
|---|---|
| My fieldwork included representatives from only five organisations in each of the categories of FBOs and secular organisations, plus a few individuals. | The research was qualitative, not quantitative, so the important findings come from in-depth exploration of meaning rather than extensive coverage. |
| All the FBOs that I interviewed identified as Christian. | The research was qualitative. Christian FBOs, while not fully representative, are the dominant players in frontline global development. In published literature, most study has been done on Christian FBOs. It is likely that FBOs from other faiths would be at least as religiously infused as Christian FBOs (see section 3.1). Further, I dabbled a little in documents and with people from Buddhist and Islamic faiths, enough to discover where my results might conflict with faiths other than Christianity. |
| Some of the secular organisations that I interviewed had a limited breadth of focus in their work so could not necessarily be expected to have a comprehensive philosophy of development. | Three of the five secular organisations had a broad focus, and all interviewees were aware of their place in and contribution to the wider development enterprise. |
| For recipient information the offshore fieldwork was in one location, i.e. one development project in southern Bangladesh. | The research was qualitative. Informants spoke from a range of backgrounds (see section 4.3.2), and triangulation with people with global experience endorsed the local views as being generally in tune with global views. |
| The development project visited was in a mainly rural setting, so excluded both the urban poor and the national structural readjustments that are important components of global development. | The research was qualitative. Among frontline recipients, who are the ultimate target of global development, the rural poor are the largest group. Without further research the results cannot claim to represent the special needs of urban poor. |
| My sample of direct recipients covered only 20 people. | The research was qualitative. However I considered responses were nearing saturation after about 12 interviews, and the remaining interviews confirmed that. |

However to return to the question over the extent to which we can universalise the findings, in addition to noting the global reach of some of my secular and FBO interviewees, we can consider

relevant literature. From a practical point of view, Geertz (1973)²¹⁰ indicates that interpretations, conceptual structures or resulting generalised theories are likely to land in a pool of ideas, and will persist as long as they prove useful to the industry. Regarding ethnographic studies, Burawoy (2000)²¹¹ describes debates over the existence of globalised theories and applications. He expounds how global forces, global connections and global imaginings can work together to shape societies (pp. 28f). He does not mention explicitly *global ideologies*, which I consider could be added as a category of its own. Lofland et al. (2006) write that ‘the goal [of analysis of data] is to formulate generic propositions that sum up and provide order in major portions of the data’ (p. 197), implying that in principle generic conclusions are both possible and valid. Details of the debate are not important here: it is sufficient to demonstrate in these references that people of some stature in the industry consider ethnographic studies – or in this context, my present research project – can be extended over a wider context than a particular local group. To adapt Narayan and Petesch (2002)²¹²: ‘While the findings cannot be generalised to represent an entire industry, the research brings to life what it means for these people, from their perspective’. Interviews conducted in New Zealand with organisations that operate globally, and literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, suggest the findings do in fact apply to many institutions and social situations across many countries in more than one continent.

4.6 Analysis

Analysis was by thematic coding, following loosely the flexible and interactive approach described in Braun and Clarke (2006)²¹³, and Lofland et al. (2006)²¹⁴. Braun and Clarke (2006) say ‘Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (p. 79). This brought out what they call latent or underlying themes (p. 85). Coding was done using NVivo software²¹⁵. Initially I used four codes, and one was further subdivided as coding proceeded, providing a total of 17 nodes, and these fed into subject categories addressed in the initial drafts of the results chapters. However the process of coding needed many judgment calls, which were often subjective and intuitive, and the code and node boundaries were flexible, with some quotes landing

²¹⁰ p. 57

²¹¹ pp. 1-35

²¹² To quote them directly: ‘the findings reported in the chapters cannot be generalized to represent poverty conditions for an entire nation. Despite these caveats, the chapters bring to life the peculiarities of what it means to be poor in various communities, in fourteen countries, and from a perspective that is not often featured in development literature: the perspective of poor people’. (Narayan & Petesch, 2002, p. 12)

²¹³ See pp. 77-101, including steps they outlined in pp. 86-93

²¹⁴ See chapter 9, pp. 193-219, especially their section on coding, pp. 200f

²¹⁵ NVivo (NVivo, n.d.) is software that ‘gives you a place to organize, store and retrieve your data so you can work more efficiently, save time and rigorously back up findings with evidence. [You can] Import data from virtually any source – text, audio, video, emails, images, spreadsheets, online surveys, social and web content and more. With advanced data management, query and visualization tools, NVivo lets you ask complex questions of your data so you can discover more’.

in two or three nodes and, conversely, much of the transcripts not being coded at all. The NVivo files provided a useful initial categorisation of material, but expositions as presented in the results and discussion chapters were not constrained by the NVivo categories. The process of turning the NVivo files into the research outputs as in the results chapters was intuitive and iterative. Finally, checking and reviewing the results were done directly from transcripts rather than NVivo files.

4.7 Summary of methods

Although the steps below were not followed precisely, the process of developing the research methods could be stylised as in Figure 11²¹⁶.

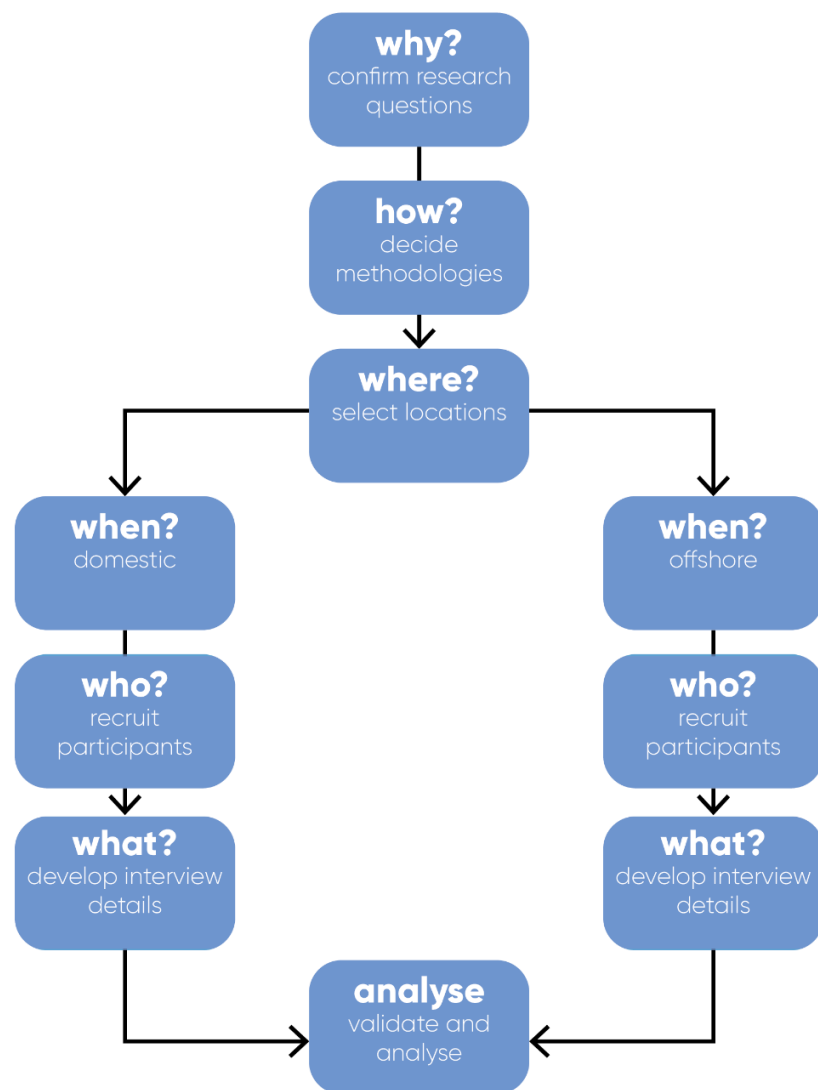


Figure 11: Methods process chart

²¹⁶ Adapted from Kipling's (n.d.) *Six honest serving men*

Chapter 5

Worldviews in the field

This is the first of three *results* chapters, and it starts the examination of the field interviews, documenting the worldviews of the interviewees. While the focus of the thesis is looking at connections between the partners in development, an understanding of their worldviews provides a helpful context for looking at connections, which will follow in chapter 6. This current chapter records views advanced in interviews and it largely defers discussion and debate until Chapter 8.

Following earlier chapters the most distinctive relationship categories of partners in development would be recipients, secular donors or practitioners, and faith-based donors or practitioners: see also Figure 6. Hence material in this chapter is built around those categories. As mentioned in section 4.2.2, where interviewees came from development organisations, I was seeking the views of the organisations. But I noted that our discussions went into greater depth than organisational documents expressed, and became the interviewees' personal comments. However all interviewees considered their own views aligned well with their organisation's views.

5.1 Village and Bangladeshi views

This material shows aspects of the culture of Bangladeshi villages that would seem to have the potential to affect relationships between the partners in development. A comprehensive ethnography of Bangladesh or its villagers is beyond the scope of the current research²¹⁷. Interview outcomes are presented under two headings: religion and agency. Religion was the more common issue raised by villagers, while agency proved a convenient heading to collect a range of views which villagers alluded to and external observers and interpreters of Bangladeshi culture expounded in more detail.

5.1.1 Religion

Religion²¹⁸ figured prominently in discussions with villagers, and it proved to be one of the more tangible of ontological worldview topics to examine. As detailed in chapter 6 all Chandpur TCDC villagers whom I interviewed were firmly religious, and religious thinking was foundational to their worldview: regardless of their particular religious identity they all believed in God or gods.

²¹⁷ Useful introductory ethnographies include Maloney (1988) and Gardner (1991).

²¹⁸ As explained in Chapter 2 this thesis considers religion as a system of belief, and implications of those beliefs; while other aspects, such as ritual or symbol, were not pursued during interviews.

I tried to discover their concepts of a deity. Farhad and Kwan stated 'He is almighty ... he can do anything', and others endorsed that. I tried to explore what they thought Allah²¹⁹ would like about Chandpur TCDC but people found that a difficult concept: after hesitation the most common answer was 'education' as a step to a better life. In connection with the project Anwar stated that 'Without Allah's will nothing could happen; because of Allah's [will] so many things happen', and Arafat endorsed that.

Arafat, Fardin and Mehedi had a long conversation between themselves about God and ethics, and summarised for me that 'every religion gives some restrictions or rules and regulations ... that is why God ... gives us religion'. That was the common view of villagers. Yasha explained further that 'those who tell lies, they have no religion, and those who speak the truth, they have religion'. On a different line, Saiful echoed many people's thoughts in saying: 'I know that God say always do good to the people'. So religion-based ethics, especially compassion and integrity, was the common foundation of trust between people. Only once did the subject of an afterlife appear in the interviews, when Mehedi gave the formula: 'There is no partiality with Allah: those who do good get good fruit and will go to heaven, but those who do bad will get less fruit and will go to hell.' So in practice religion seemed to be concerned mainly with ethical practices in the here-and-now.

Salma was unique in speaking about God in relational terms, talking of his²²⁰ input to her material welfare through the project: '[Therefore] I give thanks to him ... I love God', although she conceded that sometimes 'God is angry with me'. Apart from her – Salma was Christian – it seemed that the villagers' understanding of God and any relationship with him were less important than the ethical rules of religion. Chapter 6 will address the importance of having a religion, and the relative importance of a particular religious identity versus ethical rules based on religion.

Views varied on the nature and effect of a spirit world other than God. Shalia, a Muslim, gave a lengthy story about being possessed by jinn²²¹ but that level of involvement with the spirit world was the exception. Nasir, Pradeep and Rafi argued between themselves, summarising for me that 'most people ... don't believe they exist', and the idea is just 'superstition'; but Rafi admitted 'they can create obstacles', and 'in our country people believe it'. Farhad and Kwan stated they believe in the 'holy Koran', and while conceding ignorance about what the Koran said about spirits, they 'don't believe in evil spirit, like Jinns'²²² but accepted many other people do. Fahima and Ritu, while initially saying they did not believe in jinn, later talked openly of how 'they try to catch other people'. Salma,

²¹⁹ In village interviews I used the names 'God' and 'Allah' as equivalent, and that seemed acceptable. While 'Allah' is sometimes seen as the distinctively Muslim name for God, Oliver explained that in Arabic, Allah is the normal name for God, regardless of religious affiliation.

²²⁰ For convenience I use the male pronoun *he*, *him*, etc. when referring to God as this was the usual ascription from my interviewees or interpreters.

²²¹ In the Koran, Jinn are spoken of as spirit beings, e.g. 15:26-27, ch 72 (Dawood, 1956).

²²² But see the previous footnote

Rumana and Labiba readily accepted that evil spirits exist and the latter two talked of times in their villages when the spirits caused injuries, or tried to kill many people, and had succeeded in killing one man they had known. Most agreed the spirits did not like the development programme, but are inhibited in the villages because 'many people are living here'. For the majority, who saw the spirit world as malevolent, some considered they were protected, themselves, by being 'God's child', by engaging the help of experts in the spirit world, and by living in close community and at a safe distance from the spirits. Box 4 provides an example of the effects that recipients' spirit-beliefs can have on a development project.

Box 4: Village latrines

One development worker informed me of an incident where a number of latrines were installed in a village. This gave the facility to improve the hygiene of the village and eradicate faecal-sourced diseases. However, a year later, the latrines were not used. The explanation was that deep dark pits would attract evil spirits into the village, and that would introduce new sicknesses. The programme was managed by a Christian FBO, which explained that Jesus, who had more authority than the local spirits, could set them free from the power of these spirits, and this intervention led to successful implementation of the hygiene programme.

Outsiders endorsed those ranges of views about the religious and spiritual beliefs of Bangladeshi villagers. Regarding religion, external interviewees agreed that villagers were universally religious and could not contemplate an irreligious life. As one of these interviewees, William, said: 'You cannot separate ... the development programme [from] the religion of the beneficiary: it is too much a part of them'. Regarding a spirit world, outside opinions of village beliefs, like the villagers' own thoughts, varied. In Mosharraf's opinion, for example, 'All the people think ... that the spirit, they also live in the environment around' and some will try to stop the development programme. Shakib stated that 'people at grassroots have lots of fears' and that 'jinn affect motivation'. He advised that jinn 'are both good and bad' and that 'the bad effects can be seen in greed', including within the operation of development programmes. But conversely he considered that 'even at grassroots people tend to ignore the topic' and that either it is seen to be of little practical importance or 'they assume Allah will handle the situations'. In the end, Imrul, Sanjida and Shakib, perhaps at variance from Mosharraf, all considered spirits and spirit beliefs are not big influences in rural Bangladesh.

A later interview with two practitioners from a different country gave a story of more intensive interaction with the spirit world, as described in Box 5.

Box 5: Human needs versus killing mice

Talking about spirit beliefs, Max and a local development project manager, Timur, described a situation in an east-Asian country where the recipient partners had a religious and cultural problem with killing mice, which had increased to plague levels. Timur explained that in his culture 'it is generally a sin to kill any animal as it could be one of our ancestors'. In the end people were persuaded that increased productivity and its many benefits were a greater good, and the mice were exterminated, Timur confirming that 'human need overrides the evil' of killing animals. Discussions with Timur and Max identified five conditions which, generally in some combination, can make it acceptable to kill living beings or disturb nature:

- 1) if someone has demonstrated that it can be done without bringing bad luck from the spirits of the ancestors;
- 2) if something good, some current need, is helped by the activity, such as earning money to provide food and education;
- 3) if a lama [that is a monk] is hired to conduct an appropriate ceremony;
- 4) if offerings are made to the spirits when disturbing nature; and
- 5) if a harvest offering is made.

5.1.2 Agency

To more open and general enquiries around the theme of 'What is a Bangladeshi worldview?', only one villager, Hafiz, was able to respond. He decried what he saw as an endemic mentality of 'depending and begging off others'. Outsiders supported and explained that description. One term to help address this is *agency* which provides a convenient heading to collect a number of views expressed by villagers and others. While in interviews with villagers this topic was less common than religion it was important in defining their worldview and the ease with which development organisations might be able to connect and achieve their own agendas in a programme. From outside the villages both ex-pats and Bangladeshis provided extensive comments and they agreed there was a Bangladeshi worldview, and that village-level views generally mirrored a broader national view. Ella, for example, saw a Bangladeshi worldview as having a recognisable national flavour that 'can kind of sprawl across all the religions in the country'.

Saiful and Imrul gave stories that illustrate two concepts of agency: the concept of *patronism* described in Box 6, and the concept of *dependency* in Box 7. Both are aspects of how people see their power to make decisions²²³.

Yasha explained processes by which people become recognised as leaders in their communities: the important point for this thesis is that, once they are confirmed in their positions, it is not acceptable 'to disagree with the leaders or elders'. Regarding the start of Chandpur TCDC, Anwar explained the

²²³ Both expressions are also similar to what is called in some settings a *cargo culture*. All these expressions assume wealthy or powerful outsiders are the source of goods or protection in return for loyalty, and all diminish the responsibility of local people – their agency – to effect change themselves.

decision to proceed was effectively a village consensus on the recommendation of political leaders and project people. There was no vote, just ‘everyone in the village were agree’. But, to some extent, he contradicted the idea of consensus by saying that people in the villages would not disagree with recommendations of the leaders and, to Western ears, that sounds like acquiescence. This topic is addressed more in section 8.2.2.

Box 6: The gift of a mobile phone

The interview with Saiful provided one helpful illustration of a patronistic culture. Paraphrasing: ‘If a person in power offers me, as a poor person, a mobile phone, I must take it, even if I already have a better one. This is a tradition imposed on us by our positions in society, and this exchange retains stability in social structures: the person with power has expressed his obligatory generosity, and I have expressed my obligatory dependence. Further, in receiving the phone, I should show much gratitude and should not say “I already have a better one”. That unspoken reservation does not denigrate the benefactor, or patron, in the eyes of the recipient: if the powerful benefactor shows consistent love for his clients, they will have confidence that he can be trusted to care for them always, and in response they will give him their loyalty.

This dependency on outsiders, whether Bangladeshi or Western, did not generally seem to be considered to be passivity or fatalism, with a suggestion of fatalism being largely rejected by local people. People’s ambitions might be small, but Imrul echoed the view of others in saying that villagers make plans and take action. It is common for people to preface plans with the expression ‘insh-allah’ – by the will of Allah – our plans will succeed. Saiful considered that to villagers the phrase meant ‘Allah will help those who help themselves – it says in our Koran’. Shakib supported that, explaining that a Muslim will often say ‘in the name of Allah’ as an expression of humility, ‘acknowledging the place of Allah in all parts of their lives’ rather than an excuse for inaction.

Box 7: A big Western basket

Imrul talked of his country’s culture of dependency. ‘Bangladeshis, we always see Western helpful towards the poor countries especially for the poverty alleviation’. He introduced the image of a basket: Bangladeshis ‘always think that [Westerners] have big basket there, many things are there. ... If we allow them they will bring their basket and they will provide us many things. ... When, ah, we started the self-help group programme, “Please put your share into the group”, that time there was question why you should, you know, make our capital, make our savings. Because if project is there, the Western people are there, they have the basket and they will open the basket and you will have everything that you need ... Always looking for handout items’.

Josh also modified ideas of a patronistic culture and its potential for passive acceptance of a status quo. He said he sees the poor as active agents, stating that:

the ability of the poor to survive in what to me look like horrific conditions continues to always overwhelm me with a sense of incredible resilience that they have to survive and, in a sense, flourish in very, very basic conditions in terms of ... economic and material outcomes.

So to Josh words like ‘*resilience*’ and ‘perhaps that word *survival* should actually replace the word *develop*. They are actually flourishing in very, very difficult situations’. William, while agreeing that

‘this part of the world has a history of patronage’, also went on to say that patronage is ‘not bad per se’, and Westerners tend to see it in a more hierarchical way than what it was traditionally. To Westerners ‘patronage is anathema’, and they don’t want to ‘use the power of it’, and ‘don’t want to be seen as patrons’. But he considered that, by enlisting powerful people as promoters of change, it can be possible ‘to see the patronage as an opportunity ... to benefit the community’.

As noted earlier, another extension of patronistic culture is deference to people in authority, to the point of tending to agree with whatever they say. Regarding poor people, Saiful said that generally poor people are afraid to disagree openly with a person they see as senior:

They accept authority ... but sometimes ... [it] is not accepted in their heart. [So] we agree very easily ... The boss is always right: “The sun rises from the east”: “Yes, boss”. “The sun rises from the west”: “Yes, boss”.

As an educated person Saiful said he ‘can disagree slightly’ with his boss. Nazmul supported Saiful’s exposition of agency but extended it beyond highly educated people, considering that mind-set ‘is gradually reducing’ due to generally wider education. He said that, although in the village people’s worldview, ‘still the hierarchy and the power circles depriving [them of] their [power]’, they are realising “‘I have some potentiality ... dignity ... right’”. Kalam confirmed the traditional cultural inclination, saying hierarchical relationships are given a higher value than factuality of statements, and this helps create a more flexible approach to truth than what the West expects.

Further effects of patronism, according to Saiful and Shakib, include that it has bred a culture of selfishness, where people ‘grab what you can for yourself’, leading to ‘corruption [which is] a great problem for development in Bangladesh’. Discussing that theme further Shakib stated belief in spirits ‘can be seen in greed’, and William confirmed: people ‘live in consciousness of the spirits but they are materialistic’ so the role of the spirits is aimed at material outcomes including prosperity.

Connected with patronism was the question of how people saw the future: was the world a place where one would be optimistic or pessimistic, and what were their dreams? Rafi said: ‘Bangladesh ... will be a rich country and can ... reach its goal ... [when] our country will be 100% educated’. The prospect of education led to a wish by Dina that ‘my son can get a good job in the future’. In addition to education Lata wanted her son ‘not to be a foolish boy’ which, in the context, I understood to mean he should live by good values. At the other end of the scale one grandfather, Yasha, said his hope for his grandchildren was that ‘sometimes they feed me’, reflecting the limited outlook of a person who had been living in inter-generational poverty. Josh described Yasha, and people like him as having shown ‘incredible resilience’ rather than vision. Josh also considered that for these people their hope for the future was their children’s life ‘will be better than the parents’ life. What the worldview is in behind that, um, I don’t know anyone knows’. For villagers, hopes for the future

were almost entirely bound up in their children²²⁴, with education featuring prominently. However even the most far reaching of these ambitions reinforced the views from outsiders that Bangladesh's village people have small visions, focussed on themselves and their families as, almost exclusively, no goals or hopes were expressed for broader or longer term community development. The most significant contrary views were, again, from Rafi and Anwar. Rafi said projects like the Chandpur TCDC 'will help Bangladesh move away from depending and begging off others'; and Anwar supported the project 'because the village and society will develop': that included a wish that 'every one of us may live together' in harmony. This proposed radical change in culture is addressed further in chapter 8.

5.2 Secularity

Turning now to Western secular organisations, I had primed participants before the interviews that I wanted to discuss their organisation's worldviews and had outlined the questions I would ask²²⁵ (See Table 4). Anna presented her organisation as having values of courage, connectedness and justice, and these were behaviours that supported its 'rights-based development work'. Further descriptions of 'rights-based' included addressing 'power relations ... marginalisation ... justice ... self-determination ... gender ... inequality'. These values and rights issues 'are part of our worldview, and spirituality is part of that'. Anna did not elaborate what she meant by *spirituality*, and I inferred she meant it in the minimal sense of *non-material*: in any case she saw that as consistent with her organisation's secular position. Nathan was clear that his organisation 'has a worldview, and this is that the world is secular'. He thought being secular was a requirement of New Zealand's constitution. Then regarding what secular might mean, he speculated 'it might refer to freedom of religion, including no religion, and/or not prescribing any religion as favoured over another'. For him it was associated with 'New Zealand's separation of church and state', and when we discussed the origins of that principle he had some ideas but was ultimately unsure, and said for any more detail I 'would need to see a constitutional lawyer'. Regarding cultural and worldview discussions, he said he wants to see 'local communities agree together that there is a better way, that is an economic way, of doing life and making progress', so he appears to see human society as being primarily an economic system. In contrast Daniel, from another secular organisation, said 'we talk about a [humanitarian] ecosystem': we did not have time to explore what he meant by that expression²²⁶.

²²⁴ In the aftermath of a disastrous earthquake in Afghanistan Sadeed (2011, pp. 178-179) tells a moving story of the value placed on children, and the depth of love that only a community-of-origin can supply to orphans.

²²⁵ To retain confidentiality I do not align interviewees with their organisations. Alignment of personal and organisational views is addressed in chapter 8.

²²⁶ The expression *humanitarian ecosystem* is used in crisis management to map the organisations, policies and frameworks – governmental, international and local – that have contributed to the crisis or could contribute to its solutions (see e.g. <https://phap.org/sites/phap.org/files/Self-Assessment-UHE.pdf>, retrieved 20 December, 2018). This appears to be the meaning of Daniel's expression.

One interviewee who had had experience within MFAT²²⁷ expressed the opinion that, for MFAT, while religion had been recognised as important to the work of development, it is only one factor. He considered that MFAT has effectively shelved the topic as it had ‘diminished in importance’ in favour of other needs ‘clamouring for space’. From his global experience he considered the same had happened in DFID.

So despite my prior priming and despite a variety of promptings in the interviews, there was minimal material from people I interviewed in secular organisations, and two participants could not describe their worldviews in any terms. In this thesis that limited feedback is reflected in the generally fewer references to interviewees from secular organisations. As with villagers’ self-perceptions, other parties had various opinions on the worldviews of secular organisations, and responses to them, and these are presented in chapter 6.

5.3 Religious development workers

In contrast to secular organisations, people from FBOs provided a rich goldmine of information on worldviews and were generally able to articulate ideas in greater depth than interviewees from secular organisations²²⁸. The following summary of relevant interview responses provides an insight into attitudes and assumptions that shape the thinking of FBOs. I note again that all my FBO interviewees were from organisations that identified as Christian. Again, I also note that the interviewees, while considering their comments aligned with their organisations’ views, often elaborated beyond formal organisational statements and we should consider their comments to reflect their own interpretations of organisational positions.

All people from FBOs affirmed substantially the traditional Christian creedal understandings of the nature of God and humanity’s connections with him²²⁹ as underlying tenets of their organisation. In this they were consistent with their organisations’ published descriptions of their views and values. But those doctrinal understandings were not what they highlighted. Regarding his organisation Albert said ‘we really don’t define ourselves doctrinally’, and speaking personally Mosharraf stated: ‘God has designed ... [me] for the social work, that’s my spirit’ and ‘we are the implements’ who put it into practice. These emphases also led to a preference expressed by some to be known, not by the label ‘Christian’, but by the descriptive term ‘followers of Jesus’: a term that indicates an allegiance to a person plus an active lifestyle choice²³⁰. Jackson reflected the views of possibly all interviewees,

²²⁷ I note that these interviews were between 2015 and 2017. There has since been a change of government and it is possible the new government might bring different emphases or policies.

²²⁸ Similar to interviews from secular organisations, to retain confidentiality I do not identify interviewees with their organisations.

²²⁹ One example can be found in the Apostles’ Creed, see Presbyterian church (2017).

²³⁰ The term ‘Christian’ is also considered ambiguous. As Sam explained, it is a ‘culturally loaded label’, and a term that comes with historical and cultural baggage that his preferred term, ‘followers of Jesus’, avoids.

saying 'Our God is involved in history, he is not complacent but is deeply disturbed by evil and suffering.' Or as Sam said regarding his organisation:

the bottom line for us is that we believe that Jesus Christ was God in human form and that God the creator was prepared to undergo the suffering of a violent human execution to change the world, and to be our prime example of how we ... live.

Richard expressed a similar personal position more effusively saying:

For me Jesus is absolutely central ... it's who Jesus is that empowers me. And that the fact that God is like that is so stunningly exciting every day – that I am a part of what God is doing in the world, and that God could work even through me – that is something that for me is hard to run away from.

So while creedal statements were foundational to their understanding, my interviewees put their emphasis on relational and practical implications of those statements.

Looking at how those views penetrated the faith-based development enterprise, Jackson stated: we are 'God's incarnation' and we go 'as humble, vulnerable, frail sinners ourselves, providing signposts to a better and spiritual reality'. More pragmatically, Rosa stated her organisation's goals as 'Bringing people to an understanding of who Christ is and into a relationship with him' and 'bringing people out of a life of poverty, out of a life of injustice, or abuse': that was her concept of 'holistic'. William's organisation 'serves the rest of the community, and in doing that promotes ... Jesus' way of life, the counter culture of God.' Still at a high level, Jackson saw the development task as 'very political' as our job is to 'transform the world's questions, challenging its structures and its direction of drift, we disturb its way of thinking'. Most FBO interviewees saw that transformational job as including the need for spiritual development if people are to become fully human: Albert, for example, does not 'segregate the physical and the spiritual'²³¹. Richard considers 'the universe is filled with sacrificial love ... [which is] at the very heart of God', and Sam echoed 'self-sacrificing unconditional love is our aim, ... grace and forgiveness are cornerstones of our operation'. Only one FBO worker, of Bengali ethnicity, saw religion as being about keeping God's rules.

Other applications include human rights, with Jackson echoing the views of most, saying 'we are all made in the image of God, and everyone is noble and valued'; Albert adding 'every child is born equal ... [and] ... should have the opportunity to reach their full potential'; and Rosa wanting to 'give [sex-slaved women] dignity in life again'. To these workers not only poverty but also suppression of women's rights and any system that locks people into limiting roles are seen as evil in God's eyes. Sam and Josh, in particular, expressed strongly how that God-sourced equality translates to an imperative for grassroots-led development. For Josh that had included a baseline survey that came

²³¹ Including in this case it was not always clear what FBOs meant by *spiritual*.

to be promoted by NZAID as a model for project initiation. For Sam it showed in his organisational values which include: 'downward accountability to the people we serve', and he quoted a case that he felt revolutionised one programme through the 'genuine unconditional way' that he delegated the spending of financial grants.

Looking at hopes for the future, Rosa admitted that in the near future there are some areas where 'I just can't see light at the end of the tunnel'. Richard said 'the ultimate trajectory of the world is love, and that's where it's heading, but I think we've got some huge challenges along the way'. He saw signs of hope in a 'growing willingness for people of all faiths to engage at a much deeper level'. When asked whether we have control over that future ourselves, he hesitated before replying, simply, 'Yeah'. Regarding his own contributions to development, Richard said 'what God thought about me was much more important [than what other people thought about me]', that he, himself, is 'flawed', and achieving what he should is 'a daily struggle'. All who addressed future hopes were optimistic that God would bring good, eventually.

Regarding belief in a world of spirits, Rosa said: 'Definitely, we've seen it, we are too engrossed in it', and Michael confirmed his organisation affirmed there are spiritual beings. So those who addressed the topic agreed, similar to most Bangladeshis, that there are real spirit beings.

5.4 Purpose of development

Shakib put forward a view that, starting from an assumption that all people have a mix of divinity and fallenness, development programmes should aim at producing 'spiritually developed people'. This theme stirred him, and was a clear preference over a material or economic focus. He described 'spiritually developed people' as people who have a values-based ethos: helpfulness; humility in the face of the vastness of humanity, the world and the universe; and putting others ahead of themselves. Growing in those values was to him the central purpose of development. Shakib presented these as personal views rather than distinctively Islamic – he was Muslim – but he hoped many people of faith would endorse them.

Coming from their biblically-influenced worldviews, people from all FBOs also voiced soft goals as the aim of development including, for most, aspirations in religious belief. For example Richard's overarching theme, as both means and goal, was love: 'the trajectory is love', and this itself 'is a theological thing'. Rosa spoke of '[bringing] the earth ... back as part of [God's] kingdom', and of achieving 'freedom ... economically, physically, socially, spiritually'. Sam also emphasised freedom: 'the word "development" is the same as "freedom"'. He stated 'I have no interest in [importing a new technology] if it doesn't free people ... Ultimately I want to see that technology used to free and transform the whole community'. Then he added: 'I actually don't think freedom can happen without the values of Jesus', which to him included knowing Jesus, not just following his ethics.

Albert wanted to see people and communities ‘fully develop’ ‘on a spiritual level, as well as an emotional level, as well as a physical level’, with a rider that ‘the community always has to own its own development’. Jackson said the goal must be ‘to transform nations’, to see in practice ‘communities say “Jesus is Lord”’. For him this includes having a spiritual base to understandings of life, as ‘spirituality shapes our economic and political structures’ and includes ‘empowerment’. Michael aims for ‘that difficult concept of “life in all its fullness” for everyone’. To him that addresses community transformation more than individual, and treats people as ‘body, soul and spirit’: and in its turn ‘spirit’ includes God-awareness. Specific development targets fit under those umbrellas and more quantifiable targets such as economic goals are only steps towards development. To Josh ‘a hope for a better future is development’. Or alternatively ‘development equals well-being’, which in its turn includes the classic ‘social, economic and environmental outcomes’ with the addition of ‘spiritual infusion ... that God is ... active in this world’. Josh saw these goals as parts of a coherent whole, and not in competition with each other. William saw one development project as promoting ‘Jesus’ way of life, the counter culture of God’.

Looking at expectations of villagers, as far as I could ascertain, for most their visions and purpose were limited to hoping their children would receive education, obtain good jobs and have a good character. As noted earlier Rafi and Anwar looked more widely, seeing education as bringing societal benefits in self-sufficiency instead of ‘depending and begging off others’; and in community ‘peace and dignity’. But, as described in section 7.2, for a few villagers the goal of the Chandpur TCDC project was continuing handouts of material goods, so perpetuating a patronistic or cargo culture.

Secular organisations had a variety of purposes. Nathan’s comment, quoted earlier, about ‘a better way, that is an economic way, of doing life and making progress’ showed, for his organisation, a singular purpose of economic progress. From Megan came a series of values-based operating principles aimed at freedom of choice, empowerment and equity, to achieve economic and social goals ‘around better housing, better food, health, education, children, um higher income, um, women empowerment’. As described earlier Anna and her team worked to a ‘rights-based agenda’, essentially aiming to improve power relationships and equality. It was not clear what her ultimate purpose was. Jessica works with an organisation that provides a service as requested by in-field partners with, only a vague end vision in mind.

5.5 Worldview summary

This chapter has described the worldviews of people interviewed for this research, as far as they were able to expound them, and Figure 12 summarises key distinctive features of the three categories of parties. Where my interviewees were representing an organisation, their understanding of their organisations would be the *de facto* operating outlook of their organisations.

By highlighting distinctives Figure 12 emphasises differences rather than commonalities, and highlights space for potential disagreements. Chapter 8 discusses ramifications of these worldviews, addressing both similarities and commonalities.

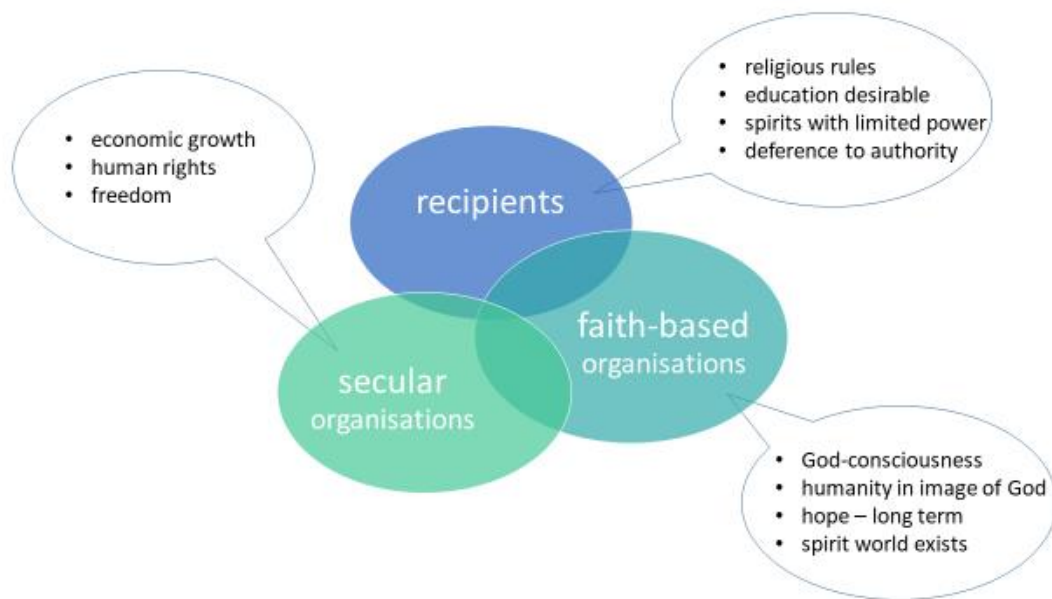


Figure 12: Worldviews of categories of partners

Chapter 6

Growing connections

The material in this chapter is given its own space as it addresses the heart of the research question. Through the comments of people whom I interviewed, it records the perceptions of relationships between the partners. It also elaborates where there were differences in perceptions of the depth of relationships between some of the partners; and addresses the place of long-recognised professional approaches to engagement between partners in development. The same as for the previous chapter, this chapter is a recording of views advanced in interviews and it largely defers discussion until Chapter 8.

For clarity, to differentiate the parties and direction of link, this chapter splits the earlier icon of the three parties in development, with its overlapping spaces, to show three separated groups: see Figure 13. When discussing relationships in the following sections of this chapter, this figure helps identify the relationship being described, and the results address systematically the three arrows and six possible directions of the arrows. Fieldwork results reveal the extent to which separation and overlapping represent reality, including the extent to which the parties might see themselves and the others as partners versus independent or even antagonistic entities.

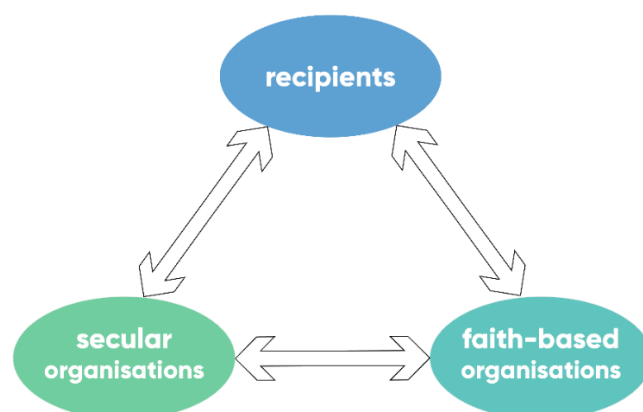


Figure 13: Conceptual framework illustrating relationships in development projects

6.1 Secular and faith-based organisations

We will look firstly at relationships between secular organisations and FBOs, starting with how secular organisations see their rapport with FBOs.

Both secular organisations and FBOs work in development as donors or practitioners, and Daniel, from a secular NGO, said that 'being a faith-based organisation does not preclude your ability to work with them': he gave this as a concession that indicated a degree of discomfort with FBOs. He explained further that some FBOs are 'struggling with perceptions ... that the aid that's available

through [them] comes with strings attached. ... The struggle is a mix of perception and a mix of, in some cases, reality'. Nathan, from another secular organisation, stated that he works a lot with church-based NGOs, especially in the Pacific, but conceded he prefers to work with secular organisations because of the potential for bias in the delivery of aid from religious organisations. So there can be limits to any sense of fraternity. It was clear that secular agencies accept readily that FBOs contribute substantially to the development industry but the relationship can be ambivalent.

MFAT documents add interesting tints to the picture. In its current guideline for ODA support MFAT (2017, p. 6) says 'ineligible activities' include 'promotion of, or engagement in, religious or political activities'. That brief statement is the document's only mention of religion and is open to a variety of interpretations. Further, being part of a document that is entitled *guidelines* rather than *rules*, it sounds potentially flexible.

However FBOs had a different perception of their relationship with secular donors and practitioners. Oliver, who manages a number of development programmes in one FBO, explained how he perceives that MFAT operates this guideline as an ironcast rule and, as a result, his umbrella organisation had had to create a new entity to 'guarantee' separation of so-called poverty alleviation from 'evangelism, church planting, church training'. He also stated 'We do have a broader focus [than economic development] ... but [there is the] practicality of getting MFAT funding'. Jackson's opinion was that 'when secular agencies engage with Christian missions, they try to instrumentalise us, welcoming our sometimes good project delivery but expecting us to omit faith aspects if we want to use their funds and work in partnership with us'.

Sam, the head of another FBO, exclaimed 'Absolutely not!' when I asked if he was able to talk with MFAT about underlying belief-based worldview issues in development projects. He described ways in which his organisation had attempted to engage with MFAT, how he had 'opened the door for some discussion' but MFAT had not accepted the invitation. With regard to talking about a Christian worldview or perspective on development Max, from another FBO, stated 'I would never do that under an MFAT [contract]', and Josh talked of secular funders having 'this incredibly negative sense of, somehow, coercion'. Oliver said 'MFAT policy ... [is perceived as saying] build your economic development and then people will be able to pay for their own health and education', whereas he thinks 'build your education and health and then the economic will follow', in other words social development precedes economic. One person, who worked closely with MFAT, stated that MFAT has an explicit and overarching goal of sustainable economic development. He stated, despite mention of education, health, sustainability, climate change, and 'distributional' growth²³², the goal

²³² I take that to mean that economic benefits must be distributed through society, and not accumulated by those in power.

was primarily about material things, and those other elements were seen as enablers of sustainable economic growth.

Looking beyond MFAT, all FBOs that I interviewed consider secular organisations are suspicious or even intolerant of FBOs' religious ethos. Looking firstly at the goals of development, FBOs, with their particular view of holistic development, tend to see separation of spiritual and secular as artificial, and counterproductive to the aims of development. Hence my expression above: 'so-called poverty alleviation', with spiritual and religious elements separated from development rather than integrated with it. Turning our attention to the means of development, FBOs also see strict separation as counterproductive to working relationships with recipient partners in the field. For example Oliver, again, says '[the] Western mind-set is actually fairly intolerant of anything religious'. Max complained that when working in the field, using funding from a secular organisation, he had to use his days off to have any discourse on spiritual interests of his recipient partners, which he found were important to his relationships with them. He would have preferred to integrate spirituality into his development activities. He voiced further his opinion that secular organisations are selective in their antipathy to religion as it was his Christian faith that caused the problem: he believed he would have been more free to integrate spirituality into the projects if he had expressed any faith other than Christianity. He considered there is an anomaly in that nowadays in New Zealand spiritual aspects of cultures other than Western Christian are expressed within normal business activities, especially Māori spirituality. So Christian FBOs see their international development work as being singled out for taboos on spiritual and religious discussions. They also see a secular approach as narrow and fragile, and not fitting the culture of the majority of recipient communities. Further, where secularity is a condition of funding, they see this as forcing an alien worldview on both practitioner and recipient. This latter topic will be addressed later.

6.2 Secular organisations and recipients

The next pairing we will consider is recipients and secular organisations, and I will present first the views of development organisations.

Looking at relations between secular organisations and their recipient partners in the field, Anna accepted the religiousness of recipients, and stated 'we very much want to reflect and respect those ... worldviews, if they are particularly spiritual in the countries in which we work'. Sophie added

[Our organisation is] really open to working with the churches, especially if the church is a really big part of the community life ... We are not a faith organisation ... [but] it doesn't mean that we don't engage with [religion].

From the context I inferred that she considered her organisation, by being secular, was in a position to engage more broadly than would an FBO with stated roots. More on that later in this chapter and

chapter 8. Regarding religious belief and its manifestations, Nathan asserted '[my organisation] is definitely sensitive to local wishes', and agreed 'Good rapport can only happen if the underlying assumptions are expressed', and he went on to say: 'a shared agenda, such as peace and justice, which is in effect a worldview issue, creates a bond and enables people of like mind to work together effectively'. So he acknowledged the value of the deeper bond that comes from being on the same page, but for him that 'shared agenda' did not need to include religious connections. Jessica's organisation does not have a clear worldview, but is 'open minded' to listen to recipients' views and work around them, effectively finding a way to avoid them. While recognising 'it's very important for them', she regards religious identities and issues as 'not that big a deal, really'. Her relaxed approach was possibly taken further than for others I interviewed, but this arms-length and optional attitude to the religion of their recipients seemed to typify secular organisations.

However relationships as expressed by recipient partners were different from those perceptions²³³, a serendipitous event in the village interviews in Bangladesh being a turning point in my research. I had been receiving bland assertions of tolerance of people of a variety of religions – see later for details – until I started asking: 'What would you say if development workers who came to you had no religion?' From that interview on, from person after person, as I repeated that question, the answers were spirited, even explosive. The typical answer was an incredulous 'How is it possible?! ... We cannot accept them!' Anwar stated 'Those who have not belief in Allah or creator, we will not give him permission to come to us', and Farhad and Kwan declared, 'If they want to buy land ... [We] say: "You leave us!" ... We don't want to accept them!' Fahima and Ritu were adamant: 'We would never agree!', and Rumana and Labiba proclaimed: 'We hate them'. Sharmin asserted simply: 'There are no such people!'

When I asked for reasons for rejecting irreligious workers, Anwar gave the typical response: '[Those] who have no religion, who have no faith in God, how can we trust them?' For these villagers, religion was foundational, Rumana and Labiba saying '[They] who have no religion, they have no life', and Farhad and Kwan adding 'Those who have no religion have nothing, so how can we believe them?' Fahima and Ritu, reflecting on the basis of ethics that they find in religion, said 'What will they do? ... They will take our money and run away!' Having a religion is also a key to social relationships so people without religion would be outcasts. Anwar, again, said 'They have to accept that there is a creator ... otherwise we have no room for them', Sharmin stated 'They have no things in common [with us]', and Lata added 'people will not mingle with them'. The underlying assumption kept coming back to trust via an assumed two-way link between religion and truth, Yasha, reflecting the views of many, offering the opinion '[He] who has truth, he has religion, [he] who has no truth ... has no religion'.

²³³ Except where noted, this part of the story is limited to my fieldwork in Bangladesh.

That high level of suspicion was not universal. Rafi said, 'If I am a beggar I will accept help from anyone ... [including an] atheist ... religion doesn't matter.' Shalia said, 'If they wanted to help ... I accept their help ... As a human being I believe them.' Sharmin, who I quoted above as saying 'There are no such people', conceded later that although she would prefer to work with religious people, '[those without religion] who have good character, we can work with them if something is good in them ... [if] they love the people'. But those accommodations were minority views, and the idea of people having no religion was incomprehensible and anathema to most villagers.

I explained the secularity of New Zealand, and of many New Zealanders who engage in aid and development programmes, and probed for some relaxation in people's positions. I asked if they would allow non-religious people to provide a well, which I thought might be a low-risk activity for them to engage in. Depending on their responses I asked about teaching in the project school, as I imagined that might present a greater cultural threat. In response, even when pushed, a number of people would make no concessions. Panna stated 'Why should we ... believe other people? ... I don't want to accept any unknown person', and Anwar said 'We just reject them ... they would be shameful'. Others were more accommodating, for example Rumana and Labiba who said 'No-one will reject [a new well]'. That pair also went further, stating "[We would] give them opportunity to teach our children, but actually ... [we] would be suspicious'. Fahima and Ritu explained that if a non-religious person came 'through [the development project] then [we] will accept them' including for teaching in the project-supported school: their comfort was that the helpers would be under the umbrella of the development project, which they were familiar with and which they knew was managed by religious people.

Considering further this theme of familiarity I interviewed later two project managers from another country. Timur and a colleague, both local people who were managing development projects, explained they had operated under 'atheistic Communism' for some decades so were familiar with 'the concept' of development workers having no religion. They indicated the local people would engage with 'secular Westerners' particularly if they were kind and showed they cared about local people. However they indicated that, even after their long experience of secular workers, atheistic beliefs would be 'an additional barrier' to a close and trusting relationship.

It is interesting to see how external commentators and FBO donors and practitioners view this general villager apprehension towards people with no religion. This topic is addressed more in section 6.4 but, meantime, one typical view was from Albert, a leader in an FBO, who considered that if you just respect but don't share the religious worldview of the recipient community 'you still get categorised ... as an infidel.' The respect you show them 'would be of some assistance but ... [it] won't open the sort of doors that I have found.' Nazmul, an FBO worker who is from another area of Bangladesh, confirmed:

those who have no religion, who do not belong to any religion, they have no values. So we think: How will children be educated? Or ... without any religion you cannot actually produce good things ... all charity motivation has come from the religion ... Because that is teaching them love each other, do good for others.

Or as Saiful, a Bangladeshi from outside the project, said:

all religions work for ... the development of mankind, for the wellbeing of people everywhere ... it's my perception, I think, if a man has no religion, I think he couldn't have any ideology ... humanity. Because every single person ... he or she has to have the faith on God. ... People of all religion created under God so everyone's duty is to worship for God ... I know that God say always do good to the people ... "No religion" say that you do bad for people.

So Bangladeshi outsiders and two practitioners from another culture endorsed the Bangladeshi villager apprehension of non-religious people, perceiving relationships with secular donors and practitioners more negatively than the perceptions held by the secular donors and practitioners.

6.3 Recipients

Before considering how villagers and FBOs connect, I will look at how village people related to other religious affiliations within their own villages. This section interrupts the flow of the chapter. However, before we examine their relationships with and perceptions of FBO people from outside their village settings, we need to understand how village people relate to those of other religions within their villages.

The three religions identified in the villages were Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, with Islam dominating at 87% of the population of the project target area, Hindu 11%, and Christianity 1.8% (Baidya et al., 2008, p. 3)²³⁴. As a foreign worker, Oliver said 'cultural and faith diversity is something that people in Bangladesh know better than actually a lot of us in New Zealand know', and the ready acceptance of others was endorsed unequivocally by some villagers. Farhad and Kwan explained their inclusive view: 'every person has their own religion, they are worshipping their god ... it's their personal opinion, their personal decision'. Arafat said 'all men are the same ... God made people different ... but the main religion is the same'. Lata added 'It doesn't matter, the religion ... we respect each other, we have no argument about religion', and Fahima and Ritu said that Muslims, Christians and Hindus were 'so good friends'. They repeatedly stated 'religion doesn't matter' because 'we are human beings ... people of faith ... we are talking with them, sitting with them'. That phrase – 'people of faith' – was significant to them and others and, in the context of the whole interview, the expression 'religion doesn't matter' meant 'the particular religion doesn't matter': as

²³⁴ Josh, in a documentary film about the project (BANZAID, ~2016), stated higher proportions of both Hindus and Christians, but with Muslims still a large majority.

described above it mattered a great deal that there was a religious faith of some sort. But their comment also continued another theme, that of knowing your people: 'we are talking with them, sitting with them'. Sharmin, a Hindu, stated 'He who has religion, he has something in common'; Anwar, a Muslim, explained 'Allah created all, the [particular] religion is not the main issue'; and Yasha, a Hindu, stated passionately 'I love all the people: Christian, Muslim, Buddhist. All of them are my dearest brothers ... all of the religious people, they are my relatives'.

Moving specifically to attitudes to the minority of Christian villagers, there was, again, high acceptance among the other faiths. Fahima and Ritu said 'Though we are Muslim and they are Christian we are living together peacefully, they are our neighbours', and Rumana and Labiba added: 'Christian people are good ... we believe them because they are our neighbours'. Mosharraf considered that acceptance of Christians is helped by Christianity being mentioned in Hindu sacred writings. Nasir, a Christian, explained his view that Muslims and Hindus trust Christians because 'they know them ... they are not doing injustice or corruption and are good men'.

However, other villagers expressed hesitations and noted aberrations from outside the project villages. For example Fahima and Ritu, while saying that in the villages Muslim, Christian and Hindu people were 'so good friends', considered that local 'religious leaders, they seem hard', and were out of step with the tolerance of villagers. On this point Kalam, a project manager, had a different comment, considering there is more acceptance of diverse religions at the senior levels of government than at the village level. From those potentially conflicting comments we could postulate that there might be a difference between politicians and religious leaders at a distance, who are not immediately in contact with project people, and lower-tier leaders nearby who might see their authority being threatened more directly by the possibility of different religious influence – in this case Christianity. This could be a subject for further research. Eliab, a Christian, observed: 'Based on thirty to thirty five years' experience in life ... Muslims don't believe Hindus, some Muslims believe Christians, I myself don't believe Hindus as much as Muslims'.

Other Muslims described their particular understanding of God as being a single and good being, as important to them, and Muhammed as supremely revered among a number of prophets of God. According to Saiful, Muhammed, as 'the last prophet', had given the final revelation of God, and in that, Islam was superior to other religions. I did not ask for a comparative evaluation of people's religions, and no one from Hinduism or Christianity offered an opinion.

I examined the databases to see if different categories of people showed different attitudes regarding acceptance of other religions or acceptance of the Chandpur TCDC. I looked at the categories of village, gender and religion. The samples were too small to allow credible statistical analysis, and there was no obvious pattern: rather the different responses seemed to be spread across all those categories.

6.4 Recipients and faith-based organisations

The third link to consider is between recipients and FBOs. Here, the results from the recipient end are from the Chandpur TCDC project, while the comments from FBOs range more widely, reflecting their global experience.

BAB was the implementing partner on behalf of the New Zealand sponsors and the village people, and was overtly a Christian organisation. Pradip, a villager, expressed a common view that before the project started ‘many people’ said that the Christian teachers at the school ‘will teach them and then tell the children “Now you become a Christian” ... the people worried about that ... there was a lot of talk about that’. Kalam, a project manager, endorsed that, experiencing, at his end, significant disquiet with people saying ‘No, [the project promoters] are bad people, they want to convert somebody’. So the general level of fraternity expressed in the previous section came under stress during project initiation and the early stages of project development. However Rafi, whose view was echoed by Anwar – both Muslim – acknowledged some people had concerns initially but in his opinion it was only those ‘who were ignorant and illiterate, who know nothing about the wider country and benefits of schooling, they were the ones objecting. But educated people were all in favour of it’. Rafi explained his view that

We all come into the world knowing nothing, nothing about society and religion. We all learn from our parents ... [so] if people come from different countries with different religions, that’s OK as long as it is for developing and improving society.

Nasir also played down any differences, saying village people did not think that ‘if [their children] studied at a Christian school they would become Christian’. Kwan, a Muslim, was ‘not at all’ worried about Christians coming to do the project. Rafi remarked that, as human beings, there is more that unites us than divides us: a theme that was repeated by a number of others. Sharmin, a Hindu, liked it that there were ‘no foreigners there ... staff for [the project] were Bangladeshi ... [and I was] happy, happy to work with them’. On the question of trusting Christian project people, Sharmin said ‘Yes ... morality is existing in Christian people ... their character is always good’, and Lata knew from experience the village could trust them ‘because the church and neighbour are Christian’. Shalia and Panna, both Muslim, said ‘ten years we have been involved with them ... When Christian mission came ... we know the church people they have a good religion’. Rumana and Labiba, however, had conflicted views. Building on trusting relationships with Christian neighbours, they said at one stage ‘Of course we believed them ... they come to us and make good relationship with us’. But at another point in the interview one of them stated the reservation, ‘I never believe micro-credit programme, I guess that one day Christian will destroy us’. And Fahima and Ritu, who were quoted above as strong supporters of broad-minded acceptance, conceded that if Muslims were running the school, that would be ‘even better [than Christians]’. Putting it into its context I believe that remark was an

expression of an attitude at project proposal stage, and meant 'At the start of the project I guessed that one day we would have to convert to Christianity'. They went on to say 'Yes, in the beginning we had suspicion ... [but conversion] did not happen ... so over time we grew to trust them more'. Salma spoke similarly: 'At the start we thought they started the school so they could make Christians but slowly, after a year, we realised that it wasn't that but rather for the improvement of the country'. In response to these worries, Lata looked at the school curriculum and argued: 'No! Why they become Christian? They are ... learning Bangla, English, and math, why they convert to Christianity? ... The children will grow with education, develop and progress their individual life ... are growing in good environment'

A second hesitation was about working with Christians in the project itself. In the opinion of Nazmul, an offsite project person, religious distrust was to an extent a cover for other jealousies, such as the prospect of people's wives starting to earn significant incomes. Endorsing the accounts of initial suspicion from local community leaders, he stated that jealous local religious leaders and community leaders, and also some husbands, had spread rumours that the project would induce people to convert to Christianity. For a time these local leaders became angry and tried to turn their fellow-villagers away from the project. But as a reflection of nine years' work on the project Anwar reflected the views of most in saying 'till now we are seeing good things'. Nasir, again, considered that if someone came to help who was a Hindu, he and other village people would not trust them. Regarding the idea that the project people might teach the Christian religion, Anwar said: 'at the beginning some of the people were worried about it but when they sit and discuss with me and I said to them "If the school run like government primary school" that is OK'. Shalia and Panna, who adhere to two different branches of Islam, said 'at first ... we were worried about ... "Now our children become Christian?"' But they sent their children to the school anyway as 'Christian people ... are helping and supporting us ... [But in the school] They didn't say "Please accept Jesus, accept Christianity"'.

Oliver endorsed project evaluation reports that addressed community relationships²³⁵, considering, himself, that Chandpur TCDC

has been able to bring the people of different faiths together, so that they are working together more, and they say that the project has been part of doing that, enabling their different faiths to work together ... By being upfront about it and saying, this is what we are doing as Christians. As Christians our religion says we should be helping the poor, we should be helping people regardless of their faith and so this is what we are doing. And we talk

²³⁵ For example Mitra et al. (2014, p. 7): 'Project group members regularly say that before the TCDC project, there was little sense of "common-unity" (community), but now the project members (Muslims, Hindus and Christians) sit and work together for a better future.'

about it and, yes, even Islam says you should be helping people. And Hinduism says you should be helping people, so it's what we are doing. And building community through that. Seeing religion not as something that divides but as something that can bring us together.

However in addition to the stories of rapport or rapprochement, project personnel reported that limited pockets of suspicion or even antagonism have continued. So, while the ready acceptance across religious identities presented another area of surprise, there were isolated cases where acceptance of diversity was more equivocal. This is addressed more in chapter 8.

That was an account of relationships with the development project as seen by the villagers, and now to complete the triangle, we will look at relationships with recipients, as seen by FBOs. This was another major finding and an area of surprise.

Looking first at the Chandpur TCDC project, the messages were mixed. Project personnel, who had to manage any unease, and who perhaps perceived troublesome incidents as more problematic, generally expressed a greater level of concern than had the villagers. Imrul mentioned a 'peace-making programme' in the planning stages of the project, and said that was 'initiated by us to maintain the religious harmony among the community.' There had been 'some tensions ... extremist groups, militant groups' but 'all the people came out that we need to make harmonious relationships'. Again on pre-project preparatory work, Kalam stated

they are thinking ... "Do they want to preach gospel and make us Christian?" ... it took some time ... [for them to accept] "They not coming actually to make us Christian but developing the community." So after that finally they realise ... this is a good thing for our community. Then we start working.

Nazmul recorded the benefits of hiring local people to help, saying the project, for some activities 'hired ... both Christian, Muslim, Hindu: they were joined together'. Kalam gave an example of how they worked to win the trust of the villagers:

in the community we take one student like [X] ... we hire them as a child tutor ... they are working with us in the village group ... so then [the villagers] believe us more: "Oh, yeah, there's one person from our community, he knows about it", so we get more trust [from] them. Sometime [the tutors] are Christian, most of the time they are Hindu or Muslim ... in a real meeting while everybody's there with the manager, supervisor, CDO²³⁶, they're with us. Because they know the strategy themselves ... [the villagers] are coming to believe in us.

However he pointed out that the process of gaining trust was never finished. For example difficulties arose when there were changes in village leadership, with a new leader taking a different approach

²³⁶ Community development officer

and requiring effort to win their confidence. Also, when the project hired helpers from other parts of Bangladesh, there were suspicions about the religious or other cultural identities and agendas of these new workers. Even some years into the project, Mosharraf said: 'community people not accept me ... because Christians and Muslims, we are divided'. Nor were peace-making efforts successful everywhere. A few people mentioned one village out of the twelve in the project where a distrustful attitude simmered throughout the project life²³⁷. As Kalam said 'They don't like Christianity, they don't want us to work in their community in case they convert to us.' Nazmul added 'Always there is few people, sometimes they are try to create problems from the back of this thing. That type of people is everywhere.' In his opinion the tension was more about politics than religion, as he said opponents were concerned 'if [village people] become educated well about their lives, about their position, ... they will demand their rights, they will demand access into the local social base, and that will, you know, will decrease their [own] share'. The dissenters were seeking for personal gain and 'They use religion as tools, that [opposition] is not about religion'. Nazmul expanded on this later, saying

still now, the idea is that if any Christian organisation working in any places, the community organisation ... not the poorer ones but the community leaders, especially the religious leaders, they are very suspicious that Christian NGOs or organisations, they will convert those people into Christianity.

Despite all those cautions, Oliver considered '[The project] has been able to bring people of different faiths together ... enabling their different faiths to work together ... by being upfront ... as Christians', including working together to integrate their faiths into the project. In the eyes of Eliab and Jahanara, the outcome had been sufficiently striking for them to say that what God likes most about the project was that 'People of all faiths ... come together ... they aren't seen as different because of their faith'²³⁸. Prior to the project, in the words of one interviewee: 'Muslims talk with Muslims and Hindus with Hindus' and, by implication Christians with Christians.

In the opinion of Eliab, who had worked on the project, '[Muslims] trust [Christians] more than other faiths like Hindus ...'; Jahanara interrupted, 'because they see [their] lifestyle, the good relationship between ... husband and wife' [example given]; and Eliab continued '[and] the behaviour of [their] children'. Kalam endorsed similar sentiments, saying the confidence of people was high because of the Christian churches, 'who believed this project was good for [the villagers], and they're helping their community'. Imrul indicated that simple familiarity was a factor, saying 'they are used to seeing

²³⁷ I encountered that when I visited that village in 2010. A group of about six men aggressively accused the project managers of trying to convert the people to Christianity. Conciliatory responses kept a lid on tensions on that occasion, but apparently the efforts only plastered over continuing distrust.

²³⁸ The short film *Peacemaking in Bangladesh* (BANZAID, ~2016) highlights improved cross-religious relationships that had come about in the area through the work of the project.

the Western people, and they especially know the Christian people'. Nazmul quoted villagers as saying: 'We know them [Christians], they are very good people, and when we are in emergencies they have helped us.' These speakers could be accused of blowing their own trumpets but, as described above, their self-congratulatory comments align well with those of the villagers. So the task of winning trust was made easier by the reputation of Christians in general, and of local Christians in particular. As noted earlier secularity shut secular workers out of this level of connection. See further comment in chapter 8, which addresses also questions over the extent to which FBOs and religious recipients see their developments as religious and spiritual, explicitly or implicitly.

Looking across Bangladesh more broadly than Chandpur TCDC, Oliver stated that in some circles a non-religious NGO would have no extra difficulties

in terms of the Bangladesh government [but might] ... at the village level ... where there is this anti-[foreign]-NGO feeling. [However] the fundamentalist Islamic group said to us: No, you're OK, we know who you are and we've got no problems with that.

He also told a story about a relief programme following floods in 1988:

someone had spread the story that we were using the aid to make converts ... one of the centres we used was an Islamic school ... the manager typed up a letter of recommendation. He said "this is the best aid distribution that I have ever seen. Your guy can come and work here anytime he likes" ... it was a passing phase that went through Bangladesh, this anti-[foreign]-NGO thing.

Shakib explained that Christians have been in Bangladesh for 150 years, they have shown no bias in their development, and they have a good reputation. Putting this discussion in a wider context, Kalam described what he saw as the national view, stating that Bangladeshi culture has a hierarchy of acceptance of people with minority views: by religious identity most acceptable are Muslims, then Christians, then Hindus, then atheists. He stated gays are also at the bottom, on a par with atheists; but having an affair can be more acceptable, perhaps a lot higher, even 'good'.

Finally, looking globally, through the eyes of the FBOs that operate internationally, there was another perspective in the relations between FBOs and recipient parties. Jackson, the head of a large FBO, stated that the poor 'tolerate us', that is 'they do not like us or develop a good relationship with us ... It is the exception to engage ... to earn trust'. He went further, presenting a bleak picture of some relationships, and saying the poor 'are gracious to us, allowing us to do the things we want to do, that satisfy our backers and ourselves.' In his view part of the reason was that FBOs themselves have been a powerful force for secularising the less developed world, and this has created reticence among recipients. He explained that typically, in addition to believing in a spiritual world, Western

FBOs' underlying theologies support physical and scientific explanations for many of life's events and in practice they compromise their holistic theologies by often ignoring the 'middle spiritual ground' (see Chapter 2 and further discussion in chapter 8). Josh, talking about 'a Western medical approach to health' as being counter to village cultural and spiritual beliefs, agreed that Western FBOs take this approach. So to recipients their actions can imply unintentionally that they regard a Western secular view as an adequate explanation for life. These workers say that generally this has not eradicated the less developed world's underlying spiritual beliefs, and it has instead created barriers to communication. Despite these arguments, I note this secularising trend does not seem to have occurred in Chandpur TCDC or at least I did not detect any way in which it had impacted relationships negatively.

A further potential negative element in recipient-FBO relationships emerged from the interview with William and Ella. William asserted that at times in Bangladeshi culture religious differences do matter, for example in charity where, if sources of aid dry up, each religion then supports its own as first priority. That had been one of the problems encountered in the Chandpur TCDC: some local Christian groups had been disappointed that the project had been even-handed to all community sectors and had not had a bias towards local Christians. Ella supported William's comments, elaborating that the local view is that resources are finite so, if one party receives something, others must miss out: a zero-sum game. In her opinion this attitude has influenced self-help programmes, causing reluctance to participate, as the donors had not explained how most development programmes would help people work together to create a larger pool of resources, for the benefit of all.

6.5 Rapport through religion

From the data presented so far it is apparent that FBOs have more in common with recipients than do secular organisations. That invites further examination. As in expounding worldviews of the parties, this search is aided by the rich vein of information to be mined on that FBO-recipient link, in contrast to the poverty of information on links involving secular organisations.

Building on his opinion, quoted above, that the poor 'tolerate us', and 'It is the exception ... to earn trust', Jackson considered that 'connection of worldviews is the basis of good relationships'. He stated that 'almost without exception the poor believe in God', and declared that a goal for his organisation is to work towards a spiritual worldview connection. From comments above it is clear that close bonds are not achieved easily. However Albert stated 'my religion has opened doors' (see e.g., Box 8). Looking at Middle Eastern situations he said, 'For people there [talking religion] is like breathing, and would you avoid breathing? Would you avoid talking about God?' But he agreed he needed to be 'appropriate' in how he talked. Oliver stated: 'there are plenty of instances where

people will choose the Christian organisation because they have a reputation for doing a good job', for example with schools and hospitals.

Box 8: People of the Book

Albert, a leader in a Christian FBO, told of his initial visit to help establish a project in a Middle Eastern Islamic country. As a courtesy, and to set up helpful links, he visited a senior local dignitary. He was warned by a non-religious colleague to avoid any mention of religion as the dignitary was known to be a passionate advocate of Islam. The conversation was conducted through an interpreter. At one point Albert decided to disregard his colleague's advice and commented: 'I like working with Muslims as we are both people of the Book [that is the Islamic term for the Christian bible, which Muslims regard as a holy book], and we have so much in common'. The dignitary who, it transpired, had a PhD from Oxford, immediately started conversing in English, and they became close friends over the years the project was under way.

Emphasising that point, Oliver stated 'I would say quite strongly in any of these countries that we are working in, you cannot work without a recognition of religious issues. Religion is fundamental'. Claiming that he has a better relationship with recipients than the workers of secular organisations can generate, he added 'I will say that I get on better with people in whatever country it is, because of my faith, because I can relate to the fact that they are also people of faith, whatever faith it is', where someone who has problems with faith would find it more difficult to make those relationships. He recounted how, when working on one development project in Samoa, he would attend church on a Sunday. His hosts commented that, because his faith was clearly active, 'you understand us'. In Islamic countries his affinity with locals has included praying in mosques and joining some of the rituals around that: his hosts had said, 'You've talked to us about prayer – come and pray with us'. In these countries he speaks with his contacts in their terms about worshipping God as Allah. As a result of this identification he said, 'I've sat in tea shops and argued theology for hours, and been invited to come back and talk about it again.' He quoted another case in Bangladesh where he encountered Islamic fundamentalists who were militantly opposed to many development NGOs 'because of their secularism'. Against popular perceptions of animosity between Christianity and Islam, they said to his Christian mission organisation:

"You're fine ... We know who you are, we know that you start each day with a prayer and a Bible reading ... What we don't understand is these so-called secularists. They've got some sort of secret agendas that are working against religion."

As another example, Josh, a project manager for an FBO, spoke of frequently praying for people. He conducted some research on this through other FBOs in one Asian country and concluded that it is almost routine for FBO staff to pray for project recipients, either by offering to pray, or at the request of their counterparts. He said this was expected by recipients because 'Christians are known as pray-ers', and prayer is expected to bring positive outcomes: 'sometimes they believe Christians have powerful prayers'. The prayers would request healing of a sick person, improvement in some

problem situation, or 'just a blessing from God on this person, their life, their well-being [as] development equals well-being.' This comes through the attitude of FBOs and recipients that everything had 'spiritual infusion ... God is active in this world,' and seemed to be appreciated rather than raising fears about conversion to Christianity.

As another practical example Rosa described the level of engagement achieved during religious festivals as 'far greater' than at other times, if Christian FBO workers are prepared to join in their celebrations:

You actually become a member of the community ... It happens when foreign workers build trusting relationships around the life stuff, which is not just about water and housing or education or whatever ... the spiritual element falls out through that. During other times of the year we are working with the economic and the physical and the social issues ... but [on] these [festival] occasions ... certainly a whole other world really opens up for engagement.

Imrul and Sanjida described their process of religious engagement at the initiation of the Chandpur TCDC project. They asked their villager partners:

'So what is the practices of your religion about development? Human development, women development, children development? That kind of thing would be discussed among them. What your religion tell? ... your holy Bible, Koran, and Gita? ... Actually no differences ... everybody's seeking their rights ... [Including] women are very prestigious, respected in Islam as it is in Christian.'

So Imrul stated 'they found they agreed more than they thought they would', the key thing was 'the people still have love for the poor', and Sanjida added: 'community are very happy for the Christian activities ... "You are doing well for the community"'.

To Rosa, by discussing spiritual issues with people who broadly share that perspective, 'a whole other world opens up for engagement, which is part of the whole being.' She advocated, for example, as part of earning trust and rapport with recipient partners, being an active participant in communal discourses on spirituality during Hindu festivals. To her, engagement on spiritual issues and being on the same page spiritually as recipient partners is an important element in an integrated approach to development, including economic, physical and social transformation.

Likewise, Richard, who has been a leader in different FBOs, stated 'we talk very openly about our differences within our own religions ... from the outset. I mean I got into that in 10 minutes of conversation with one of the people that I ... talked to.' He also recounted an episode with a person whom he described as the leading Buddhist monk of an Asian country. It was an introductory meeting prior to establishing a development project. The meeting was meant to last five minutes but:

I had a wonderful three-quarter-hour conversation with him ... In so many places we found ourselves saying: “Yes that I affirm” ... [While there were significant points of difference] it was a great meeting of minds and hearts because we recognised something in this universe and something among people that goes beyond ourselves, that is transcendent.

Sam, founder of another FBO, described his organisation’s mixed approach. Its website contains a statement of faith, which includes Christianity’s traditional beliefs about Jesus and the nature of God. His view was that, by being ‘upfront’, the statement removed any barriers of suspicion about hiding the truth: otherwise ‘they feel tricked’. The statement went on to express important consequences of that creedal framework including, in summary, ‘we live to serve God and others’; ‘all people are created equal’ so will be treated with respect, including their religious beliefs; and ‘self-sacrificing unconditional love, ... grace and forgiveness are cornerstones of our operation’. One emphasis that arose from that is grassroots empowerment. He described an episode where, in his opinion, that devolution of power had surprised the recipients by being extensive, genuine and unconditional, and different from other development organisations they knew. That had opened up a greater level of trust. To Sam, those features were consequences of his Christian theology, and they showed in respect and empowerment to an advanced degree. He also expressed the view that the core of the Christian gospel ‘was the idea of the cross, when you die in order to win’, and he went on to say ‘for a Buddhist, that’s actually a very similar value to what they have ... dying to your desires ... learning to not live for yourself’. So there was common ground: ‘the ultimate value in Buddhism is compassion which is, in my opinion, the same as *agape*’²³⁹. That created a bond, and Sam used that link to develop understandings of development goals and processes. This theme is brought together more in chapter 8.

Regarding the close connection between Islam and Christianity, Josh suggested that Muslim people might be more comfortable with Christian development workers than atheists because they see a Christian as a ‘co-religionist, as from the point of view of one God, who has created us, who we must serve and love and obey – not a lot of difference. Could they find that better than an atheist, a secular Westerner atheist?’ The feedback from most FBO workers and villagers gives a clear ‘Yes!’ to that suggestion.

On a further aspect of that hearts-and-minds connection, Richard stated, regarding the ‘moderate educated Muslims’ he generally works with, ‘we have much more in common than I would have with a fundamentalist Christian who thinks that women should be pregnant and in the kitchen. And the fundamentalist Muslim who thinks the women should be behind the burqa.’ His fundamentalist

²³⁹ *Agape* (pronounced ah-GAH-pee) is the Greek word used in the Bible for the highest form of love, ‘selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love’ (Zavada, 2018), and is presented as the key attribute of someone who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ (Jn 13:34-35, I Cor 13). It has some similarities to the Māori *aroha*.

descriptors might be caricatures but his point is plain, and Sam repeated that view. As shown earlier a religious worldview creates distance from secular mind-sets. In addition and as a corollary of the rapport through shared spiritual beliefs the worldview of these FBO workers forms a gap for them from rigid positions within their own spiritual roots.

Taking that rapport to its practical effects, Jackson mentioned one case where trusting relationships, established through religious connections, led to an eight-fold increase in funding from a national government. This thesis does not argue that such events have not occurred through non-religious organisations who had established trusting relationships without a religious connection. However the research did not discover any examples. Further, the fieldwork indicated that secular organisations were generally unaware of a relationship issue to be addressed and that such trusting relationships would be harder for them to establish.

These stories of rapport through shared religion were common from FBO leaders whom I interviewed. Oliver summed it up: 'In New Zealand ... religion is the thing you don't talk about, but not in those countries [Asia and Pacific], it's a natural part of life.' Sam said that new organisations 'ask within the first meeting, what are we on about. We let them know [our values and faith] then'. As Max put it:

instantly you've overcome a huge bridge, you've gone from one side of the river to their side, you're not yelling over the river, you're actually there and they can accept you because ... they know that you have a belief in the spiritual world. You believe in a God.

Even when religion is not discussed explicitly, it can be an underlying assumption in establishing connections. Jackson, for example, said 'the task is about being before doing', and to him that matter of 'being', or the character of the development worker, is assumed to be embedded in their religion. He considered that is also a global assumption among the poor.

Returning to villagers, as described earlier in this chapter, similar sentiments were expressed although, because of language barriers, in less depth. For example, in contrast to their rejection of irreligious people, Farhad and Kwan said

If they have religions we can accept them because he has faith, he has trust in God. ... Like he is Christian, he has a religion; he is Hindu, he has a religion; he is Muslim, he has a religion.

A passing villager interjected: 'every person has their own religion, they worshipping their God. We worship our God, they worship their God. It's their personal opinion, their personal decision'. They implied that having a religion – any religion – gives a spiritual connection, common values, a meeting of hearts and minds, in contrast to doors being closed and barriers erected by irreligion. Arafat had a theological explanation for accepting cross-religion relationships:

There are many different faiths, like Christian, Hindu, Muslim ... [But the] creator is the same, he ... gave us different colour ... made different people. ... there is separation but the main religion is the same ... faith in God [is the important thing].

Similar sentiments and rationales were expressed by Anwar, who said, in effect. 'We have room for all people who believe in a creator'.

However a number of people expressed a cautionary note. Albert asserted 'you never want to skip over the differences in worldview because that will trip you up if you start making assumptions': a comment that could be applied also to secular-FBO connections. Rosa, another FBO leader, explained it this way:

We come out of a holistic approach to the person, and ... while the initial and primary focus might be, for example, on housing and water ... in doing so we have to build relationships for people to trust us. Which means ... you start conversing and engaging on a different level. Which means the life stuff, which is not just about water and housing and education or whatever. ... I think that's one of the advantages actually that a lot of Christians have ... Certainly we are very aware of the place of the supernatural and the spiritual realm.

Richard conceded that it sometimes takes a longer time to establish trust, for example 'with the Rohingya people ... it's a much more difficult thing because they're a very persecuted minority, and their worldview [and history] leads them to be suspicious of Christians from the get-go.' He also conceded that 'I tend not to have [that sort of] conversation with ... stick-in-the-mud fundamentalists'. He explained:

it's like there are layers. And so there's this whole layer of people with whom you can discuss this stuff rationally, emotionally – you can talk about your feelings, and you can talk about your thoughts with those people. There's a group of people back here where that, at this stage, is not possible ... Years ago I might have tried to engage on that: now I recognise that is a waste of time. I'm better to engage with these people and let – because they have much more in common with this group – let them engage about the other thing ... let that seep through to the rest of the community.

For a more complex and ambivalent approach, Rosa described the establishment phase of a project aimed at rehabilitating women enslaved in the sex trade. She told of unusually careful and in-depth work to ensure her organisation shares values with its on-field partners as this sort of activity has many complexities and sensitivities. In this case Rosa stated their conversation is along the lines of "This is what your law says. So how are we going to look after these women? Let's look at our values here". Now in that situation, we're not spouting Christianese at them.' In that work the role of Rosa's organisation is largely instrumental and while, to her, the values, motivation and methods are

embedded in Christian faith, that base was not articulated during negotiations with potential on-field collegial networks. Rosa described working more generally with secular or non-Christian religious groups and was unsure about the extent to which her organisation's modus operandi and relationships might be affected by its Christian base. To her that base affects motivation, spiritual values, and understanding of the end dreams of development projects, but she said her organisation shares many values with non-Christian organisations and she agreed that other uniquely Christian positions would seldom affect on-the-ground activities. She considered, further, it is only on rare occasions that local partner organisations do not share sufficiently her organisation's values for them to work together, and that is rarer still if they are religious groups. It is also, for her, rare to expound the distinctive religious beliefs of her organisation until the partners know each other well, further into the development project. Then at that point, conversations about faith and religious issues are common, and they are often asked the 'Why?' questions as well as 'How?' and 'What?'

6.6 Professionalism

While my interviews expressed a strong and unified position from FBO representatives about the value of religious discussions, some people talked of factors other than religion in establishing good rapport. Some FBOs spoke of a need for sensitivity both on the topics of religious conversations and in how they engage in such conversations. As Rosa said, 'We have to be careful because we are guests in a host country ... What is the position that is being seen at a government level?' She stated that before there are any meetings on site 'there's already been a lot of conversations from afar', and that religious conversations with new groups tend to be about values and styles of work, to seek common ground, as some values are shared. That both connects with the people, and creates a united front where, for example, justice issues need to be addressed. For her, discussion of distinctive faith teachings might come later, usually in one-to-one conversations with recipient people when they ask about motives and purposes in life. Later still, these discussions might take place at organisational levels.

[These] conversations always are about what we believe, why we do what we do, what is our purpose for being, if you like, and they have to include ... a faith element, whether it is stated up front or whether it comes through a question.

Sam also cautioned that spiritual discussions need to be held in an appropriate way as they 'can be a door closer if done the wrong way'. He acknowledged that some indigenous communities have had bad experiences with 'aggressive' Western Christian organisations and will be cautious until they learn over time and in practice that 'love is the thing that drives us'. Richard stated:

when I see a severe point of difference or a major roadblock I tend to park it. I recognise it and I'll work around it, because we can come back to that. Let's establish all the common

ground that we have, to begin with, and get the relationship right. Because when the relationship is right then you can talk about the other stuff.

Richard also talked about groups where there is a need to take time establishing relationships because of history, as described earlier about the Rohingya. Regarding methods of working he looks for 'people of peace', or goodwill, who will be open to discussion. I asked if there are many such people and he replied:

Oh, heck yes ... But how you find them and how you approach them is really, really important ... 'cos they come out of the woodwork when you are there as a person of peace. Your attitude absolutely determines who's going to relate to you. So you come in as a learning soul, as a person seeking their good ... you go in like that, those people will emerge pretty quickly. You'll see them. Yes. You go in, all guns blazing, "we're here to solve a problem": they won't emerge 'cos they're not those kind of people. ... You do get a bit old and cynical. I've heard a fair lot of bullshit in my time, Walter, people who say the right things but you're there for 10 minutes and you're watching what they're doing, and they're not doing the right stuff. And it's really important.

Albert was another who talked of the need for time and sensitivity, saying:

As the relationship develops you create a safer space, you know ... to be able to talk more and more in terms of, or enter into that ground where you know we're not in common areas where you actually disagree and to debate and to challenge each other or to talk about ... and teach each other about our belief systems and that sort of stuff.

He added:

I think some of these other areas, although there are some quite militant Buddhist areas, where it has also been quite challenging initially to have these conversations. But again, once you get there then it's a longer journey to try and find those areas of common, common ground where we hand-on-heart can sit down and say yeah, yeah, OK, I'm good with this. And you have to navigate that more carefully and it is probably a longer journey.

As another example, Nazmul described the Chandpur TCDC baseline survey process. As he explained it, the team did not start with questions like 'Would you like a school?' but rather 'We listen to their life story: What was their struggling? How do they feel this morning? How are they surviving? What are they dreaming for their future?' It was only later that they started to ask about possible solutions. That was a classic case of bottom-up planning, a process designed to 'to help them to come out with solutions by themselves' as 'development is a process to build the confidence of the people'.

However that story of establishing the Chandpur TCDC project could be rounded out with conflicting perceptions about the depth of engagement and closeness of connection. Josh was instrumental in initiating the project and his focus was on shaping the planning process and reporting the outcomes in a way that would meet the expectations of NZAID. He was not involved in on-site discussions. He stated the process provided opportunity for people to comment on spiritual issues but he could not ‘recall’ reports of any discussions about those, and ‘suspected’ there were no discussions about worldviews and how the project would fit with those. He said ‘that level of investigation into a project design isn’t normally done’, and instead he addressed more technical criteria like those in the MDGs. Nazmul, on the other hand, who participated in the baseline survey, explained how he and others spent six months ‘trying to help them to actually explore their God-given potentiality’. As described earlier in this section, Imrul who came to have an offsite management interest from soon after project start, described baseline discussions with ‘over 1000 families’ about values, needs and expectations. He described workshops where religious views were sought, including discovering how the different local religions would impact project aims and values, and implementation.

As a further example from elsewhere in Bangladesh, husband and wife team, William and Ella, went to live in a slum area, and strove earnestly to be facilitators of bottom-up planning rather than adopt the traditional patron-client role. This created uncertainty in the minds of recipients who were not accustomed to that approach and, despite good rapport on religious values, William said ‘it was only after about six months that we were accepted ... You’ve got to live amongst the people and ... take time. ... [Change will] happen through your life and involvement with them.’ He asserted that this was important in two ways: firstly in that it worked; and secondly in that it was following Jesus’ model of incarnation. He said that in the short term you will never have ‘meaningful communication and acceptance into a community ... You’ve just got to take the time’. He agreed that foreigners can never ‘be one of them’, but with time and proven record they can be accepted on the inside of local teams: ‘you’ve moved to a deeper level of trust’ and can have more in-depth input. He explained that Christian missions had been working in his mission area for 200 years, and he stated ‘there is just so much history of Christian involvement in development and so on that you don’t need to say: “This is my worldview”’. His assertion was supported by Ella who explained that as soon as they arrived in Bangladesh ‘you are associated with the whole culture of the whole history of [200 years of Christian mission]’. But William also argued against the value of history, saying ‘there is a certain tradition here in this country ... of white missionaries or development workers and development organisations, that sometimes have to be overcome if you want to do anything in this part of the world’. But back the other way again, Ella stated ‘We live on the coat tails of those who’ve gone before’. She expanded that when they went to live in another country without a history with that particular mission, ‘it was a completely different story’, being more difficult to make effective contacts. It even took ‘a year or two before local church leaders were prepared to trust us’. A

further twist is that trust can be tentative and easily lost. William told the story of how, initially, he was accepted by Bangladesh Christian churches on the 'coat tails' of those 200 years of mission. But early in his work he took some action that, while fitting New Zealand professional practice, was perceived locally as arrogant, and it took another four years of humble work before he regained traction with local church leaders.

In summary William and Ella agreed that the history and reputation of Christian missionaries was, in their case, a valuable introduction, and that religious connections were crucial to rapport with both local Christian church leaders and local non-Christian people. But that bond came with baggage and limited understanding, and they needed to work persistently over a period of time to establish their own relationships as trustworthy individuals, and to form modern best-practice approaches to development.

Looking at other techniques of development planning, Josh acknowledged one tool, saying:

the project itself was a logframe in its own way, so my thing was: Had they reported back to the villagers and sought clarification that they had represented them clearly? And that had they suggested a project design ... from my memory they hadn't done it ... So I said: You'll have to do that. Because we said we would do that: (a) because it's good practice, and (b) we'd said we'd do it. And KOHA would ask us: we hadn't done it, that output wasn't done. And so that delayed reporting by another month, or some time until they went and did it.

Similar sentiments were expressed about the TCDC project by Nazmul, who was, himself, Bangladeshi, but from another area. He stated that it took almost six months to complete the baseline survey and work with local people to compose a project that was acceptable to both locals and project managers.

Taking this further, Timur, an indigenous project manager in another country, gave a warm endorsement of an ex-pat project manager, which illustrated the characteristics of successful development project managers. He talked of a project where the expat manager had worked on-site intermittently for 18 years and people 'had got to know and trust him ... he had demonstrated he was there to help people, he had shown respect for local people and their customs, such as eating customs, and he was willing to learn about local structures such as shamanism and Buddhism.' Timur stated that that was all a contrast with the style of work of local authorities, and had won respect for the expat manager's Christian faith and brought buy-in to the project.

6.7 Connections summary

Chapter 1 introduced the key research question of the extent to which the worldviews of the parties in international development affect their ability to work together. This chapter has presented the fieldwork results, looking at connections between the three parties of: recipients, FBOs and secular organisations. Analysis and in-depth discussion are deferred until chapter 8. For now I note that the chapter 6 results show relationships ranging through outrage, antagonism, suspicion, ignorance, caution, professionally contractual²⁴⁰, to minds-and-hearts trust and friendship. Development of relationships over time was a major feature of results. Religion appears to have a major positive influence on bridge-building between religious communities, but also a major negative influence, creating barriers between people with and without a religious faith. However a range of professional practices, particularly time spent listening and sharing in decision making, also impact significantly on the level of rapport established.

²⁴⁰ By *professionally contractual* I mean a Western-style business agreement, administered according to written expectations, without necessarily any emotional or personal relationship component.

Chapter 7

Changing worldviews

This final *results* chapter considers a consequential question: given the miscommunication and difficulties that occur through people having different worldviews, to what extent might it be possible or appropriate to modify worldviews so the thinking of the partners comes into better alignment? The interviews explored that question.

The chapter compiles material under three headings: minimal engagement; the case study of the Chandpur TCDC; and intentional change. Following the style of chapters 5 and 6, this chapter is a recording of views advanced in interviews and it largely defers discussion until Chapter 8.

7.1 Minimal engagement

Some people and organisations made minimal or no attempts to engage over differences in worldviews, and did not attempt to modify either their own views or those of their recipient partners. Where they did engage it was at the level of attempting to understand rather than modify. For example Jessica, an inexperienced worker, said

it's good to learn as much as we can and be respectful about how much our interference goes. ... [It's] just different priorities that people have got, and I guess it's not really our place to comment on that ... we are not there to play God or anything.

Regarding discussing points of disagreement and seeing if there is room to modify the worldviews of either recipient or practitioner/donor, she said 'I personally haven't gone that far', and questioned why you might want to: 'why do we not just accept that we agree to disagree and there's just differences?' As another example of minimal engagement, Megan stated the role of her organisation is to 'improve the livelihoods of the people we trade with'. She considered that did not require intimate engagement, and they do not talk at all about worldviews 'with people on the ground'. What was important to her was to be aware of cultural norms, such as community structures and family roles, that affect how decisions are made.

Nathan had two potentially conflicting views. Regarding his own engagement he said he 'leaves it to local people' to have cultural and worldview discussions. But the outcome of those discussions was important to him as he expects them to 'help the local communities agree together that there is a better way, that is an economic way, of doing life and making progress'. In his mind, among other adjustments these discussions can include 'the need for locals to see the role the churches play in perpetuating poverty through ... inappropriately large donations to churches and their institutions'

sustenance, at the expense of people's welfare'. So, while he stands back from those discussions he is wishing for a radical change in core understandings of the world and embedded societal structures. We did not discuss what would happen if those discussions did not lead to his desired outcomes.

Sophie said that she had 'never come across an example of where [there had been such a clash of values] that we'd need to leave the partnership due to different perspectives'. Her organisation's approach included more engagement than for Jessica and Nathan, enough to establish that the viewpoints were close enough for them to work together. Where significant points of difference were identified, for example regarding human rights, and especially gender issues, they were laid aside to be addressed, if at all, through on-the-ground counterpart organisations.

All comments reported in this section were from people from secular organisations, and the more substantial comments come in the next sections of this chapter.

7.2 The Chandpur TCDC example

In the Chandpur TCDC project, Imrul explained one example of a conscious programme of trying to change people's attitudes. He said: 'to provide micro-credit loans ... they are [now] using capital among their own members', and this was part of a plan to increase hope, confidence and self-motivation, to move people from dependency to empowerment. This attitude runs counter to the historic patronistic culture of rural Bangladesh explained earlier. Josh agreed there had been a programme to change mind-sets, saying:

The project ... seeks to instil ... the hope for a better future ... [and] a hope for a better future is development. And so they have this hope whereby they join in the project ... they gain solidarity, they gain confidence and ... their shorter frame of reference becomes a much larger frame of reference ... through the project. The project ... comes along beside them for a period, and then it departs away, in the project life cycle thing.

He talked of seeing 'the gaining of confidence and self, and agency increases in ways that are exciting to observe'. Nazmul agreed with Imrul and Josh, describing what he considered is a general Bangladeshi worldview where there is 'still the hierarchy and the power circles' depriving them of a sense of autonomy. He went on to say a development programme has a great influence: 'so community development is a process to build the confidence of the people, and this takes a long time'. His evaluation was that the education and discussions had been successful at transforming worldviews so recipient villagers grew an attitude of hope, opportunity, autonomy and power.

Regarding their fellow-villagers, Farhana and Rabiya agreed with those outside comments, stating:

now their mentality is changing and they didn't say what did they say before, what did they talk before, that kind of [thing], their mind is changing, because they seeing development through TCDC programme in that village. It is great blessing for the village.

The hankering for continuing handouts voiced in one village by Rumana and Labiba, as recorded earlier, was clearly an exception, as the project did not achieve grassroots led empowerment in that village, or at least for those individuals.

Framing the project seems to have been an interactive process. Imrul stated that the TCDC 'need [was] identified by the grassroots level', not by the higher levels of political authority. Nazmul modified that a little, explaining that BAB, the implementing organisation:

also added some ... indicators that helped [the villagers] to see more, I mean longer vision. So we didn't actually impose anything but we just helped them to see bigger vision. ... That was the rule for us, just to help their thinking and help them to ... critically analyse so they can find their way of solution, ... see the future for their children ... to actually explore their God-given potentiality.

He described how the questionnaire in the baseline survey provoked that exploration. He, Imrul and Josh independently described one example of a stronger external influence. Environmental issues were an aspect of development where the villagers initially had no interest. Josh and Nazmul gave different flavours to their stories on the amount of influence, Josh saying: 'solid waste management ... was about the only thing I imposed on anybody'; while Nazmul described his process of inductive education, leading villagers to come up with their own environmental ideas. Either way, this particular element appears to have been an outside-led process.

Turning our attention to explicitly religious views, informants described a number of currents and counter-currents. Among the villagers, and summarising from views expressed earlier in the previous chapter, some claimed they had had no concern that they might be encouraged to convert to BAB's Christian religion, while others had thought their children would face that pressure in the schools, and others that eventually whole villages might turn Christian. Further rationale behind these views was given in section 6.4. All people I spoke to considered any fears of proselytising and conversion had proved unfounded, and in fact they stated that religious rapprochement was one of the outstanding consequences of the project: that is an increased respect for people of other faiths and willingness to work with them.

But looking from the original project sponsors' end, that is from the local Christian churches, William considered that lack of proselytising effort, which was a condition of New Zealand government funding, has worked, at least temporarily, to the disadvantage of their longer-term goals. These churches see their broader role, that is, in addition to the goals of the project, as including spreading

the 'good news' of Jesus and that role has been inhibited by MFAT's non-proselytising condition. William stated the aim of people in the team was that 'people would see God's love and concern for his creation and for them to be drawn to him through [the project]'. The religious conversions implied by that have not happened, at least not in a significant scale. Josh largely endorsed that discussion, agreeing there was a clear wish from the project managers for people in the area to become followers of Jesus, but he stated he had never seen religious 'coercion' used. Mosharraf was one who had been keen from the outset to spread the biblical message of Jesus in words as well as deeds – that was one reason he had come to work on the project – and he considered that now (2017) 'it's the right time to give the message about Jesus, because the field is ready, Chandpur TCDC make the field [ready]'. Contrary to the opinions of Fahima and Ritu, who are both Muslim, and Nazmul, who criticised local religious leaders as opponents of Christianity, Mosharraf considered that 'all the imams ... are interested ... to learn about Jesus', and now he can 'freely discuss' with them about Jesus. We can see that the wish of the local churches for people to convert to become followers of Jesus, which was one part of the motivation for the project, has not reached fruition, at least to this stage. This topic reappears in section 8.2.1.

7.3 Intentional change

In addition to the Chandpur TCDC project I document here some incidents and broader discussions from the thesis interviews regarding deliberate attempts to change worldviews.

At a philosophical level Jackson, as noted in an earlier chapter, described his view of the mission of the Christian church: 'Our job is to transform the world's questions, challenging its structures and its direction of drift, to disturb its way of thinking ... We start movements, not institutions'. In style, he saw the job is to go 'as humble, vulnerable, frail sinners ourselves, providing signposts to a better and spiritual reality, not going as gods'. With a background mainly in Asian contexts he said the work is about 'establishing relationships, about integrity, where ... character matters', and in what he called an even more Asian response, he said 'That leads people to asking the question "What is the name of your God"'. By that he meant a different lifestyle stimulates queries about their understanding of the nature of God, as that understanding is assumed to be the platform for people's ethics and behaviour. With Jackson's particular worldview, as explained in chapter 5, this question becomes the entry for 'community transformation'. He sees development as communal more than individual, and that requires 'a very political stance', and he agrees political work will include working to the same end with a variety of agents with different views: 'The role is to collaborate but not compromise'.

In further explicitly religious discussions, Albert said 'you are not threatening in that you are not there proselytising, you are not trying to push your worldview'. But those 'non-threatening' discussions can be quite upfront as he went on to say 'I've had many debates with Muslim leaders on

different aspects of the Koran or the Bible ... things will come up ... I mean there will be an issue ... the deity of Jesus is a common issue'. 'You wouldn't want to be misunderstood as proselytising. So probably 80% [of religious debates] would be initiated by the community leaders'. He added: 'Why would you avoid [these issues]? ... For people there it is like breathing.' In the Middle East, between Christians, Jews and Islam he stated 'there is a strong set of unwritten rules around ... stealing each other's sheep and proselytising'. But, as quoted earlier, 'As the relationship develops you create a safer space ... where you actually disagree, and to debate and to challenge each other or ... teach each other about our belief systems.'

Albert considers some worldviews are unfavourable to development, for example with regard to education of children. There his organisation challenges what he sees as the caste system's presumption that lives are pre-set by fate. He said:

I can't come in ... as a foreigner and say, "Well that's just ridiculous that someone is born this [way] and they are going to die poor ... and that's the will of the gods." Well that's an approach that's going to get me thrown out, right? And it's totally arrogant and, you know, inappropriate, so what I have found is by initiating conversation though that says: "Well, can a person change their karma? ... What is this process of enlightenment and refinement? Can some of that take place here on earth?" ... posing questions, in a sense challenging, gently challenging the community to themselves reflect on whether development ... would be an acceptable, you know, outcome for their community ... That's where I've seen the biggest shifts, where a community finally go ... "We do want our kids educated because we do believe that's the right thing to do" ... but the community needs to make that shift. ... We can be a bit of a catalyst for the conversation. ... It's a really important conversation that must take place because otherwise it will hamstring everything.

Albert considered this worldview-changing conversation was crucial to the development programme. He noted those engagements were in the context of expecting a 15-year partnership in the programme.

Human rights was an issue raised by Anna regarding gender and violence against women. Reflecting that attitudes to human rights might be based on religion or sorcery she said 'one has to work within ... those constructs to see if one can achieve change ... using a rights-based approach'. In a similar indigenous situation, but regarding sickness based on a curse, Sarah advocated providing 'educational spaces to discuss it in a different way'. She considered that enabled her organisation to resolve the illness 'without challenging the spiritual belief'. So both she and Anna were seeking significant worldview modifications.

Richard described how he had worked on HIV/AIDS management in both Asian and North African communities. In both areas there was an issue about a sense of fatalism which he considered was strong, and once that was exposed and addressed he was able to work on behavioural issues about sexual practices. In both locations he identified religious leaders – in one case a senior Buddhist monk, and in the other some Muslim imams – and working together and using their own sacred writings, they developed comprehensive education programmes that he considers have proved highly effective at reducing HIV/AIDS. The starting point for the overarching issue was to persuade people ‘we are largely in control of it ourselves’, so to instil a sense of agency and hope, and he considered this was a radically new worldview. William, in one project with a similar goal of changing the local culture of dependency, used more superficial methods, explaining how, through skill development, ‘we deliberately tried to avoid the helper-helpee relationship’.

Like his colleagues, Richard also emphasised that in practice, while being purposeful about worldview change, there are processes to follow. He stated you need to ‘build the relationship first. So that’s how I do it. Does that mean that they ... shift ground? Yes, absolutely’. But, as quoted earlier, he explained:

when I see a severe point of difference or a major roadblock I tend to park it ... Let’s establish all the common ground that we have ... and get the relationship right ... then you can talk about the other stuff.

For another cautionary message about change programmes, Sam described how development can change negatively the worldviews of indigenous people by disrupting what had been cohesive communities. As two examples he said ‘people might become Christian’ and he spoke also of ‘some people rising to the top financially’, and he stated that in both cases those people can be ‘separated out from the community’. To work on worldview change his approach was to connect what was common between his own views of the teachings of Jesus and what he considered were also the teachings of the Buddha. He talked of bottom-up planning of development, with power at grassroots level. He described how, sometimes after hours of dialogue on that and other aspects of what he considers to be a radical Christian lifestyle, he has had monks ‘leap out of their chairs and say “I want that!”’

Continuing with the issue of people ‘becoming Christian’ Sam described one view. His organisation’s ‘Statement of faith’²⁴¹ says inter alia ‘We do not proselytise. We believe that living the way described in our statement of faith is enough. However, we are always willing to share our thoughts when asked.’ That quote might be considered to understate the overt, extensive and in-depth cross-worldview discussions that Sam described, covering ethical, cultural and theological topics. As shown

²⁴¹ To retain anonymity, the source of this *Statement of Faith* is omitted.

elsewhere his approach seeks to modify considerably the worldviews of his recipient partners. He indicated he would love to see all of them become 'followers of Jesus', both in practical lifestyle and by the biblical picture of who Jesus is. But he rejected strongly any wish to convert them to being Christian, saying of one Buddhist co-worker who he considered has moved well along the path towards being a follower of Jesus: 'Will he become a Christian? I hope not!' Sam considers this co-worker is already 'closer to the Kingdom of God, closer to Christian faith' in both his understanding and lifestyle than many fundamentalist-inclined people who call themselves 'Christian', and is a passionate advocate among his own people for what Sam sees as Christian values²⁴². Sam considers his organisation is not proselytising, saying:

we don't hide the fact that we are followers of Jesus and we're from Christian backgrounds, and that that affects how we do things. But we're not proselytising [in that] we don't use the money to put Bibles in people's hands and get them to respond to us in a certain way. But you ask us what we are about, I'll tell you.

Talking about religious conversions, Rosa stated her organisation's approach is site-specific. She described some situations where with its view of holistic development, her organisation is into:

discipling and the sharing of the good news of Christ's working alongside [people] ... allowing them to be who they are but supporting them in their vision to their context and culture and country ... That's ... bringing people to an understanding of who [Christ] is and into a relationship with him ... bringing people out of a place of oppression or injustice, being marginalised, abused ... giving people dignity ... educating people ...

Her wish for a conversion to Christian belief, while it might not be presented aggressively or immediately, is part of her understanding of integrated development. For example she stated:

often in the places that we are working, we have to start with the physical need and the economic need first ... and build the relationship, before you have earned the right to start talking about: ... "Now we want to tell you about a person", I mean in Jesus, "that actually can make, can offer even greater freedom for your eternity." So deal with the now, and then bring people on a journey towards Jesus and then ultimately into a solid relationship with Jesus.

Regarding one of her organisation's projects, that of helping women escape from the sex trade, she said the recipients 'are starting their spiritual journey towards Jesus'. Her comment above on

²⁴² In this context, Sam's definition of 'Christian' seems to be more a cultural expression, perhaps also related to liturgical practices, than a core belief or lifestyle.

freedom was in the context of her understanding of poverty as including oppression in any of its manifold forms.

In another country Max explained how he and a local official had worked together to challenge and eventually change the attitudes of local people, attitudes that they agreed were jeopardising an agricultural project [See story box 5]. The people had a cultural and religious antipathy to killing animals, including those that were pests. The issue was treated as religious, and the local official dealt with it entirely within the understandings of the local version of Buddhism. In this case Max explained that he did not introduce his Christian beliefs and while he said '[When working for the New Zealand government] I make sure I don't [proselytise]', he went on to say that 'people can ask me questions because they know I'm a Christian, I tell them who I am'.

Daniel, from a secular agency, regarding plans by development agencies to bring others to their own view, said

secular agencies run afoul of this as well. You see that with the human rights agenda ... it's a mix of reality and perception. So ... every NGO has their risk ... in terms of their perception. And every NGO needs to figure out ... the extent of their credibility and ... how it can limit their ability to engage with parties.

A final area of worldview change was explained by Josh who, extending his experiences from the Chandpur TCDC, considered 'all of the development activities are a proselytisation of someone's beliefs and values'. He used the example of Western scientific medical solutions to health needs with no attention to spirituality, as an unintentional promotion of a radical new and outside worldview:

so a Western medical approach to health in a village, people may know nothing about. So you are actually imposing a way of understanding sickness on people. Which is actually seeing a change in cultural belief, in basic spiritual belief.

So 'it's not just faith is proselytising. Everyone's proselytising a set of beliefs and values onto someone else'. Similarly Jackson quoted Lesslie Newbigin, a doyen of Christian missiology (Goheen, 2010), as saying 'The most powerful secularising force in the world is Christian mission'.

Demonstrating that these change processes are not always welcomed, Nazmul described a perverse incident in Bangladesh where fear of worldview subversion distorted and frustrated a development. In the course of its work a Muslim NGO was 'bringing out the women from the home'. As stated by Nazmul, the community was not ready for that cultural change and, with the support of its religious leaders, accused the NGO of being an undercover Christian organisation, and opposed its work.

Looking in the opposite direction, there are opportunities to inform the practices of Western development organisations. For example Anna talked about influencing the views of funding partners at home. Claiming to be talking for a number of Western development organisations she said 'We are a collection of NGOs that does try to influence the way ... we see the world in terms of development'. Richard looked at individual responses, indicating learning was a two-way process, and saying 'I'm genuinely interested ... there's stuff that I can learn, all the way along ...'. At one point he stated emphatically: 'I would never have thought 30 years ago that I would believe what I now believe'. It was outside the scope of this thesis to explore further that direction of change, but it would be a valuable line of research.

The topic of religious conversion is addressed further in chapter 8.

7.4 Summing up chapter 7

This chapter has presented fieldwork results on the subject of changing worldviews, looking at the comments of interviewees about the extent to which they seek to change the worldviews of their development partners. The emphasis was on changes on the part of recipients, but this direction of change was not exclusive, as some FBO interviewees and one secular interviewee indicated willingness to learn and grow, themselves, through their field interactions. Development donors and practitioners engage at a variety of levels and intentions, ranging from superficial engagement to deliberate attempts to modify the worldviews of their partners, even making such changes a condition of working together. The highest profile topic of change, and the one that raised the greatest concerns from donors and recipients, was about religious proselytising. However the more common and coercive, although often more subtle, topics were for changes towards Western scientific understandings, secular philosophies, and Western-style human rights and empowerment.

Chapter 8

Discussion

This chapter brings together the material presented in *Chapters 2 and 3*, reviewing literature and theory; and fieldwork results described in *Chapters 5, 6 and 7*. Its purpose is to discover where and how the fieldwork findings add to the published literature and to interact with some theoretical concepts underlying development activities. The chapter uses a number of quotes from interviewees or literature, often repeating from previous chapters, to make this chapter somewhat standalone. These were usually selected to represent similar views from a number of sources.

This chapter is long and complex as it combines ideas from a range of global experience and literature, and from more targeted interviews with people who often felt strongly about their views. Chapter 9 then provides a more succinct summary of the findings.

The discussion focuses on how well the partners in international development connect with each other. It looks at the degree to which their connections tend to be superficial, reserved and suspicious; or achieve a deeper hearts-and-minds rapport. Then it examines the idea that we live now in a post-secular world, and the extent to which that sociological theory illuminates our understanding of relationships between the partners in international development. The discussion also comments briefly on some other worldview-related theoretical concepts that emerged through the fieldwork as being relevant to connections between the partners.

8.1 A three-party typology

To represent the main parties in international development this research considered initially a typology of three role-based parties: recipient, donor and practitioner. However this proved difficult to use as donor and practitioner were often the same organisation and, for my interest in worldviews of the parties, both donors and practitioners had too wide a diversity to enable meaningful analysis of them as a unit.

So while the thesis uses that typology at times, I adopted as a more frequent structure a different three-party worldview-based typology – recipients, secular development organisations, and FBOs – in a triangular relationship. This choice rested on two considerations. Firstly, it seemed likely that this classification would provide an opportunity to explore in depth my field of interest. Initial enquiries showed that religious identities and assumptions were important to all three parties, and it looked as if there would be both enough commonality within each category and enough divergence between the categories to tell a helpful story. Religion was clearly important to recipients and FBOs; and just as critically religion's counterpart, secularity, was important to secular organisations. Secondly,

those three parties dominate the development sector – recipients, clearly; secular organisations as the main funders globally; and FBOs as probably the principal frontline workers – so issues that are important to those parties could be expected to influence global development efforts. See Figure 6 in section 2.5 and discussion later in this chapter for further details.

To introduce the discussion, I note the argument, presented in chapter 2, that despite some common values and ‘universal truths’ (Walls & Triandis, 2014, p. 345), Hiebert’s (2008) assumption is also true that ‘people live ... in radically different conceptual worlds’ (pp. 14-15). As shown earlier, especially in chapter 5, the fieldwork reinforced that conclusion. In particular it showed that a focus on religion would help categorise key assumptions about the nature of the world, and in their turn, these assumptions would help shape differing goals and methods in international development programmes.

A further preliminary comment is to note that, as in section 4.2.3, it is helpful to consider the degree of alignment between the views of my interviewees and of their organisations. Published worldviews of the organisations of people I interviewed were expressed only briefly, and our interviews went into greater depth than any published worldview. For secular organisations in particular, written worldviews were expressed only minimally, and most of them had to be deduced rather than taken from explicit statements. All my interviewees considered their views reflected those of their organisations and, to the limited extent that their organisations did express worldviews, that seemed to be the case. Further, I could argue that, with my interviewees being influential people in their organisations, their views help create the finer nuances of beliefs, attitudes and values that shape their organisations. So while I have sought to make it clear where my interviewees were expressing their own views the differences in practice between these and their organisational views is likely to be of no significance.

8.2 Accord and dissonance

Given that there are significant worldview differences between partners in development, the main thesis question is about the extent to which the partners bond in shared understandings of aspirations, goals and methods. In examining that issue, we need to consider the extent to which we can draw clear-cut conclusions, or recognise a more nuanced continuum.

This thesis assumes good relationships will help execution of development projects but it does not examine that idea. That theme appeared constantly in the fieldwork, as reported, for example, in sections 6.4, 6.5 and 7.3. A variation was from a Bangladeshi official who, regarding the level of engagement required with local people, differentiated between infrastructural development and social development. He considered deep engagement is not essential for infrastructural development, as that is relatively straightforward. But he considered that ‘social development is ...

difficult and complex: it requires grass-roots engagement and development of new ideas' from and in the village people, 'who cannot comprehend new ideas easily'. Others did not share his view fully as some considered even infrastructure, for example details of education and medical facilities, depends on local people understanding their needs and what is feasible, and on a mind-set that is schooled to use the facilities. Apart from that one incident, the research interviews did not differentiate between infrastructural and social development. A related distinction might be able to be drawn between long-term holistic development and limited scope activities, with long-term programmes needing more engagement between the parties. Those assumptions on cause and effect underlie numbers of comments made in interviews and in the literature. It would be helpful to address further the connection between relationships and development outcomes but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. One question could consider the degree of rapport on fundamental assumptions about life and development projects that is required for all the partners to be satisfied on project outcomes. Or conversely, what happens if key assumptions are not identified.

Chapter 3 introduced theories of cross-cultural dissonance, that is, the idea that people of different cultures can be out of tune with each other cognitively and culturally. Worldview assumptions as described in chapter 2 show the potential for significant miscommunication. Chapter 3 also discussed the concept of people both talking past each other through different understandings, and of avoiding talking because of discomfort over assumed differences in the way others see the world. The fieldwork for this research showed that, while people did not use these terms, instances of cognitive and cultural dissonance are common in international development, and these communication phenomena occur in all arms of the triangle of relationships.

8.2.1 Religion

This major subsection considers the contribution of religion to people's perceptions of how well they connect in development work. It analyses secular and religious worldviews then, under a number of subheadings, delves into the main theme, and finally addresses the concern of proselytising in development.

Religious and secular worldviews

Hiebert (2008) writes of the way we unconsciously develop our worldviews, so 'they are generally unexamined and largely implicit' (pp. 46-47). However this does not mean we cannot identify and describe worldviews of the parties involved in development. One key and obvious indication from the fieldwork was that religious belief was universal among the villagers: that fitted earlier information in the literature about less developed people groups (see section 2.2). From chapter 2, and for this thesis, I describe religion as *a system of beliefs, either personal or communal, which includes a transcendent power, gives meaning to life, and shapes behaviours, values and hopes*. This

definition puts aside other elements such as rituals or symbols, and institutional aspects, which can be important to some groups, and concentrates on more ontological understandings which frame those other expressions of religion. Taken in the sense used in this thesis, religion is core to recipients' and FBO workers' understandings about the structure of the universe and human relationships as it assumes there is a real person or force that has shaped and continues to shape or govern everything. From this research, both villagers and FBOs would endorse this description²⁴³, and to them it is a foundational and overarching aspect of worldview. Religion in this sense influences or determines all other assumptions about power relationships, political structures, and other types of worldview; understandings of the nature of humanity and society; and goals for development. To people with this perspective all aspects of life are religious, including education, health care and science, as religion provides a lens through which they see and interpret the world. However religion comes in many colours and, apart from the core – for this thesis – of belief in a transcendent power, specific behaviour expectations can vary. For example on the value assigned to truthfulness, section 5.1.2 described how in some cultures (e.g. Hofstede (1984), Boyle (1998)²⁴⁴), truth can be subjugated beneath harmony. This does not invalidate the idea of religion being endemic. Rather it fits a worldview of the 'excluded middle' (section 2.4) where the will of the gods is less clear than in a Judeo-Christian view, or it fits a vertically layered patronistic culture: in either case the immediate local powers represent the highest accessible authorities and a goal of life is to please them.

Regarding this transcendent power, and drawing on chapter 2, religious people live somewhere along the spectrum of, at one end, strength, freedom and inspiration from the presence of a God who has revealed himself to humanity as powerful and compassionate; through, at the other end, to fear of unpredictable malevolent powers whose natures are deduced by trial and error. To recipients in the Chandpur TCDC development project, religion was primarily about rules for living, and this proved to be one of the more tangible worldview topics to discuss. By contrast, to the FBOs that I interviewed, religion was primarily about the nature of God and humanity's relationship with him: this was the Christian belief that in Jesus, God had 'pitched his tent among us' (John 1:14) (various, 1896, p. 241) or 'moved into the neighbourhood' (Peterson, 1993). This feedback modifies Rakodi's (2011b) view as quoted in chapter 2 that 'Christianity is traditionally said to put more emphasis on beliefs' (p. 8). To my interviewees, while creedal belief statements were foundational, their

²⁴³ As noted earlier, the FBOs interviewed for this thesis were all Christian. In section 4.5 I have commented further on the potential limitations of this focus.

²⁴⁴ When working for two years in one Asian country I found this characteristic to be common among my local colleagues causing, to me as a Westerner, confusion and frustration.

emphasis was on the effects of those beliefs on a relationship with God through Jesus²⁴⁵. Then practical living, including motivation for engagement in development, and environmental, economic and social goals in development, was an outcome of those prime understandings. Further, the FBOs generally see development implementation as including interaction with God, especially through prayer, and ultimate goals as including an awareness of the presence of Jesus. One Bangladeshi Christian couple, who lived in a village, aligned more with the recipient viewpoint that I have described above, and that was also ontological in that it assumed a deity who takes an active interest in human life and is the source of communal values.

Aligning with material in chapter 2 about the nature of poverty as primarily relational and spiritual, at least some religious groups consider the Millennium Declaration focuses on narrow technical issues. That is despite a strong influence from Christian churches and FBOs in formulating it. They consider the goals should express more a hearts-and-minds belief about the nature of the world. Other religious groups consider the Declaration and its MDGs, or at least the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, are broader, perhaps even implicitly arising from biblical values (e.g. sections 2.2 and 2.3 regarding the Declaration and the 2030 Agenda, and 2.7 regarding the formation of the WFDD). As the UNFPA (2014) states (section 2.2), regarding the SDG goals, 'these needs are precisely what religions and other faith traditions grapple with. Faith is arguably the terrain where justice, peace and the struggle against inequality interface' (p. 2). Cochrane (2016, p. 90) argues similarly (section 2.2).

By contrast, secular agencies assume (see section 2.3) supernatural powers either do not exist or have no relevance to development, and that scientific arguments, including the social sciences, are enough to inform us of universal values. This leads to different views on the purpose of aid and development. At one end of the scale these secular purposes could be characterised as in MFAT's policy²⁴⁶ (2017): 'the New Zealand Aid Programme's strategic goals ... [have] a particular focus on sustainable economic development' (p. 3). My conclusion regarding MFAT's various policy statements was that, whatever qualitative social goals were expressed (section 2.3), an agenda for improved well-being was still defined primarily in material terms, and certainly by secular indicators, that is, non-cultural, non-religious and non-spiritual. This understanding of MFAT's views was shared by FBO people whom I interviewed, who relied on MFAT funding (section 6.1). The jury could be considered to be out on the extent to which MFAT's policies and practices were exclusively focussed on economic growth, that is, how pervasive was that position. At the other end of the spectrum, secular agendas could, as in the World Bank's *Voices of the poor* study, allow for people being able to

²⁴⁵ To quote Gonzalez (2010, p. 260) 'While it is true that theological error may have disastrous consequences for the Christian life, it is also true that those who do not go beyond dogma have scarcely penetrated the riches of Christianity'.

²⁴⁶ As in section 5.2 I note that most of my research was done between 2015 and 2017. At the end of 2017 New Zealand had a change of government and it is possible the new government might bring different emphases or policies.

weave into their routines ‘a spiritual life and religious observance’ (Narayan, Patel, et al., 2000, p. 38). The UN’s Millennium Declaration (see section 2.1.2) placed strong emphasis on human rights, including recognising the most vulnerable people (clauses 24 to 28), and its 2030 Agenda was about economics contributing to social agendas, such as human rights, and religious agendas so people will have a better holistic life. I noted earlier (section 2.3) that the 2030 Agenda champions ‘universal respect for human rights and human dignity’, having some similar applications to the biblical expression of humanity ‘made in the image of God’; and the Agenda also gives a strong emphasis to environmental sustainability. So these secular goals can fit well with religious agendas, and they could be interpreted as working comfortably with local explicitly religious elements. But even these World Bank documents, Millennium Declaration and 2030 Agenda, have a limited view of the input of FBOs: FBOs seem to remain as agents for the donors’ own agendas rather than as working partners who help shape the development.

Further, these documents do not necessarily match the culture and views of recipients. An interviewee from one secular organisation (section 5.2) stated they have a rights-based agenda. As in section 2.1 interpretations of rights vary across communities including religious differences. Boyle (1998) and Hofstede (1984) for example argue that a Western construct of rights comes from a different worldview that values individuality above community cohesion, and emphasises truth as a higher value than do some non-Western cultures.

Another relevant point of spiritual belief was that for most village-based recipients, their worldview included spirits: these spirits can affect people’s lives, but they have limited power and their influence is generally able to be managed²⁴⁷. This element is important to many recipients, and the prevalence of these beliefs is endorsed in varying degrees by FBOs I interviewed. According to two informants (section 5.1.2), one assumed role of the spirits is to increase people’s material welfare, and people’s attempts to use the spirits ‘can be seen in greed’: an interesting juxtaposition of the material and spiritual worlds and values. Conversely belief in spiritual beings is different from the viewpoint of secular organisations who, when they acknowledge it, try to find ways to sidestep the issue. As shown in chapters 2 and 5, this variance can create a barrier between recipients and secular organisations. Literature and my fieldwork do not provide such an extensive or in-depth view of this topic as on religion in general, and the subject of the relevance of a spirit world would be a valuable topic to address further. That study could include the prevalence of these beliefs, the assumed ability of people to control the spirits, the distinction people draw between malevolent and benevolent spirits, and the assumed effects of these spirits on development programmes.

²⁴⁷ One development worker with global experience advised that in parts of Melanesia and the Pacific, and in Africa generally, the spirits are assumed to have more power than Asian contexts assume.

From this research, FBOs have substantially clearer and more developed worldviews assumptions than do either secular organisations or recipients. To the FBOs their development goal is summed up in the expression 'the kingdom of God', which integrates 'the physical and the spiritual'. It includes a number of economic and social goals including human rights because, as FBO personnel stated, 'we are all made in the image of God'. But to all my FBO interviewees it also included, as a key to being holistic and sustainable, entering into some kind of relationship with the Jesus described in the Bible and defined in the traditional Christian creeds. FBOs have roots in Western secularity, modern rationality and science; but, like recipient communities they also use religious or spiritual understandings. Unlike their church bases, which often live comfortably with unchallenged traditions, they have been forced to examine their views of what it means in global forums to be a 'follower of Jesus', and the result is enough unity between FBOs to be able to be identified as a somewhat coherent group; but with on-going debates and variations regarding details of their ethos and activities.

In contrast, the secular organisation representatives I interviewed had limited perceptions of what secular development meant, despite claiming it was important to them. That contrasts with background literature where chapter 2 argued that ideas of holistic development and instruments such as the Millennium Declaration and 2030 Agenda could imply a secular agenda that has been prepared with thorough philosophical groundings. Secular interviewees for this research had not made that association: they were aware of the MDGs or SDGs but appeared to have little understanding of them and their conception and gestation. They fitted Brown's (2007) comment that 'our imaginings of the secular condition ... are often vague, ill-considered or not even considered at all' (p. 416).

Similarly recipients, perhaps exacerbated by language barriers and cognitive and cultural dissonance, were also able to provide only limited explanations of their worldviews, including their religious worldviews. Interviews indicated that villagers' hopes for the future are centred almost entirely in their children, and based around education, hoping their future 'will be better than the parents' life', but with no goals or hopes expressed for broader or longer term community development. A few indicated larger hopes with, again, education as the key to achieving them. But no goals or hopes were expressed for broader or longer term community development. A few also expressed the value, achieved already through the Chandpur TCDC project, of living in harmony with others: with harmony with other religious groups perhaps a forerunner to other aspects of life.

For both secular organisations and recipients a further explanation might be that, like church bases of FBOs, their worldviews have not been challenged or examined.

Religion and connection

In Bangladesh, when I asked villagers about how they would work with people who had no religion, the response was strongly negative, sometimes an explosive incredulity: 'How is it possible?! ... We cannot accept them!' ... 'There are no such people!' As explained in section 6.2 that response was widespread, almost unanimous, among the villagers I interviewed. To them, religious belief was not just universal but also crucial to their acceptance of their development partners and trust in them. In hindsight it is unclear whether villagers' astonishment was about people anywhere having no religion, or people working in development having no religion: the difference is not important to this thesis. The prevalence of religious belief in less developed cultures could be expected from global statistics as presented in chapter 2. But the next step – the importance of a connection based on assumed religious belief – added another dimension and was a key finding of this research.

I will consider this theme as a dichotomy before introducing some qualifications that could make that view less stark.

Religion the divider

A common reason for rejection of irreligious people was '[Those] who have no religion, who have no faith in God, how can we trust them?' or as one person said: 'They will take our money and run away!' Another widespread reason was typically expressed as: 'I don't want to accept any unknown person'. A further was: 'They have no things in common [with us]'. So the rejection was based on issues of trust, familiarity and social cohesion.

By contrast, as an FBO worker explained it, there are core values shared between religions that put him on the same page as recipient cultures, more than with his fellow-Westerners in secular organisations. This highlights the opportunities for close bonds between recipient groups and FBOs. In section 2.7 I quoted Clarke (2007) as saying: recipients and FBOs use the 'idioms of spiritual belief' (p. 90), and FBO-based development can 'harness the latent empathy' between people of religious faith. In practice, belief in a supernatural entity or power provides a bond that transcends religious labels and facilitates communication. It could be argued that religion, regardless of rational support it might claim, has a substantial affective component, aiding a heart connection between religious groups, that a more cerebral approach like secularity could not expect to replicate. To re-quote one development worker: for many recipient groups, '[talking religion] is like breathing, and would you avoid breathing?' One simple practical example to advance this connection, as advised in interviews with two workers (section 6.5), and endorsed by authors Schwarz (2018) and James (2011) (sections 2.7 and 3.1.2) was prayer with recipient partners, which for many FBO workers is a normal practice. As McGregor (2006) puts it, 'Connecting through prayer ... opens up new unconventional means of breaching outsider-insider power relationships and emphasising shared identities' (p. 175). A different example was an FBO worker who said: 'I believe the reason that we have made so much

headway in this community ... was the genuine unconditional way that we [gave a small gift] that allowed that community to prosper': that action and the empowerment it conferred, while not explicitly religious, came from his understanding of how Jesus himself treated people with dignity, hence 'love is the thing that drives us'. For that worker it also leans on biblical teaching that all humanity is 'made in the image of God' (Gen 1:26-27), so all people have equal rights and dignity.

Continuing that topic we can look at the Chandpur TCDC project for further information on the extent to which a particular religious identity – Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu etc. – affects relationships. As in chapter 5 a Muslim villager stated strongly 'Allah created all, the [particular] religion is not the main issue'; and a Hindu stated passionately 'All of them [Christian, Muslim, Buddhist] are my dearest brothers'. Those were typical comments. In that case most parties agreed, and surveys showed, that for the recipient villagers the outstanding outcome of the project had been, not economic development but increased inter-religious respect and community cohesion.

A number of interviewees from secular organisations presented an alternative view. Philosophically, as in section 2.3, Habermas (2006) equated secularity with rationality, reason, logic and science. Practically, as in chapter 6, one person argued that her organisation, by being secular, was in a position to engage more broadly than would an FBO with stated religious roots. That view is similar to secularist claims referred to in sections 2.6 and 3.2 who argue that secularity is a neutral position that avoids conflict and facilitates discussion. However fieldwork for this research and literature accessed for chapter 2 indicates that view is naïve, as secularity presents a more radical challenge to the worldviews of recipients than the challenge posed by a different religion. Secularist claims of neutrality reinforce the argument that secularists are unaware of the worldview differences between themselves and religious people, and that self-perception matches the view of FBOs that secular organisations are out of touch with reality. Conversely the evidence of this research is that those who have religious roots to their views, and state them, indicate common ground that helps create trust.

Despite that gulf between religious and secular camps, I noted in earlier chapters that there are different emphases between religions, and those differences could have the potential to create barriers. For example my sample of villagers tended to see religion primarily in terms of ethics and morality. That is in tune with Rakodi (2011b) who argues that 'for most people in developing countries ... "religion" ... is primarily the source of a moral order that informs their ideas about the right way to live and good social relationships' (p. 76), and she also writes (see section 2.2) that that theme has traditionally been seen as a particular emphasis of Islam. However a previous section of this chapter (*religious and secular worldviews*) argues that the theology of Christianity sees God more in relational terms, and that difference might be expected to lead to discord between, in this case, people of Islamic and Christian faiths. This research did not examine whether that village tendency

to see religion as mainly about ethics and morality is based more on religious doctrine or on local culture. However we can take the discussion further to look at a potential application in practice. We could argue that the Christian position about God's incarnation in Jesus, which is fundamental to Christian belief but is rejected by Islam, is not on the point of religion that matters most to Muslims. Spufford (2013) argues that 'Islam and Judaism ... [are] religions of orthopraxy, right doing, not orthodoxy, right thinking or teaching ... The result is in some ways a lot more moderate, a lot more stable than Christianity' (p. 44). Hence Christianity's central belief is not central to Muslims' sense of rapport with Christians, and could be side-stepped, leaving common ground over God-sourced ethical practices as a uniting force. That unity happened successfully in the establishment phase of the Chandpur TCDC. That is not to say that the Christian teaching on God's incarnation in Jesus is not contentious. Indeed the FBOs interviewed for this research indicated it was contentious, and it was a point that needed to be handled delicately. But as a preliminary explanation it could also suggest that to Muslims it might not need to be such a central point of difficulty in relationships as it might initially appear to Christians.

A further challenge to inter-religious harmony could be presented by religions with greater differences in belief than between Islam and Christianity. For example Buddhism and Hinduism have a different concept of God from the monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity. However, my fieldwork included interviews with FBO people who have worked in Buddhist cultures, and they found their religious allegiances created a bond. Examples from my own work with recipients also found strong expressions of respect and rapport between Buddhists and all religious people.

One substantive point of difference between the partners could be over end goals of development. To possibly all my FBO interviewees, secularists tend to be stuck in an 'economic man'²⁴⁸ concept, which FBOs see as reductionist and simplistic, as providing band-aid solutions to poverty. For them, from both my research and the literature, religion in its ontological sense infuses their thinking (sections 3.1, 5.3) as much as assumptions of secularity govern the plans and programmes of secularists. One FBO worker said: we go as 'God's incarnation', and others said the foundation of human rights, including the right to development itself, comes from the biblical expression that all humanity is made 'in the image of God'. To FBOs spiritual aspects of holism are not just a vague sense of a universal energy or 'inner essence for self-development, (Hornborg, 2012, p. 264), but include clear identification of tenets of their faith, and implications of those. Religion provides a continual urge to integrate spiritual, material and social aspects of development and there is no such thing as a secular activity. Rather all development work is religious in the sense that it is motivated and shaped by their beliefs, and is done for or with God. So without religion, even the broader

²⁴⁸ One description of an 'economic man' is 'an idealized human being who acts rationally and with complete knowledge, who seeks to maximize personal utility or satisfaction' (Kenton, 2018).

secular concepts of 'holistic' development are described as 'fighting its social agendas with one hand tied behind its back' (Wright, 2008, p. 224) (see sections 2.2 and 5.2, and Boxes 4, 5 and 9).

Considering the broader views of much current development (e.g. section 2.3), secular organisations might object, with some validity, that this economic image is an unfair caricature. However it was common among FBOs that I interviewed to perceive secular organisations as having an overemphasis on economics, and an examination of MFAT's documents (section 2.3) and some interviews (section 5.2) gives grounds for that. Perceptions of partners are the subject of this research as much as organisations' own views of themselves as in practice, for relationships, perceptions create the reality. At the least, secular goals exclude religious and spiritual expressions, which (e.g. sections 2.2 and 5.4) underpin FBO understandings of sustainable holistic development.

As pointed out in chapter 5, all the FBOs that I interviewed for this research were Christian. Looking at literature on Islam, Borchgrevink and Erdal (2017, p. 215) write of a pervasive 'religious obligation' to practice charity, and Ferris (2005, p. 324) noted, quoting from an Islamic writer:

Islamic NGOs "do not understand (or do not accept) that a humanitarian gesture, whatever its origin, could be made outside the scope of religious values, considering religion is the guarantor of morals, charity, good behaviour and virtue. Islamists cannot conceive of self-respecting humanitarian NGOs as anything other than religiously inspired".

These views further emphasise the gap between religious and secular people, and the base for unity between all religious people.

One question that arises as a consequence of differences between secularists and religious people is the extent to which FBOs, when acting as agents of secular donors, can inject their own flavour into development projects. From my interviews, some FBO workers were frustrated by being mere instruments. Following their worldviews (see section 3.2, and earlier in this section), they considered this approach was short-changing their recipient partners. As in section 3.1.3, recent policies of a number of organisations – for example UNDP, World Bank and DFID – have expressed sympathy for religious views, but on further inspection it was clear their approach would still lead to FBOs being, generally, instruments for the secular policies of the funders²⁴⁹. That could not be considered a true partnership, and it is probable that, to prevent any proselytising the FBOs might feel inclined to, funding organisations did not intend to establish a collaborative partnership. However it needs to be acknowledged that the arrangement is out of tune both with recipient groups and with FBOs as

²⁴⁹ Another example was a policy on religious elements in development, which I was asked recently to review for a New Zealand FBO. To satisfy MFAT's requirement of severance of religious components, the policy provided an artificial construct, full of circumlocutions, that grated with the concepts of holistic development of both the FBO and recipient partners. The policy won recognition from CID and MFAT, with no further revision or comment, but I expect they also would have seen it as clumsy.

development practitioners. The issue of proselytising is addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

So summarising negative aspects of connections among the partners the following conclusions emerge. FBOs, who are probably the primary frontline deliverers, globally, of development services, are frustrated by what they see as narrow and out-of-tune agendas from secular development organisations, and see themselves as forced to deliver only limited and less sustainable benefits to their recipient partners. On their part, secular organisations, who are the main financial contributors to global aid and development, are often unaware of the strength of feeling that recipients attach to their religion, and the degree to which religious assumptions permeate the thinking of FBOs. So, as one secular developer explained, they treat religion as a minor issue and have put it on a shelf with other less important topics. They also tend to be suspicious of proselytising tendencies of FBOs and have put measures in place that provide some safety against that. That in turn is argued by some writers to be an injustice in that it uses a position of financial power to impose secular agendas on unwilling recipients. Recipients, where they are aware of the secularity of donors and practitioners, remain silent about their deeply held spiritual assumptions, probably in the hope of gaining some benefit from the donors.

So far this material has presented the story of connection through religion in fairly black-and-white terms, with religion and secularity as polar opposites. The thesis will now look at some other themes to discover whether the reality could be more nuanced than that.

Common ground

Looking for common ground between secular and faith-based organisations, one standout topic was child development. Most fieldwork (chapters 5 and 6) and literature (sections 2.2 and 2.3) indicated there is a universal wish for children to do well in life, educationally, health-wise, financially and socially, including with good morals. The exception was one interviewee's view (section 7.3) that a caste system presumes that lives are pre-set by fate, and this is unfavourable to the education of children. In the field, his organisation challenges that worldview. A number of writers argue (section 2.1) that there are universal human values related, for example, to tolerance of diversity; a desire for freedom, and mental and physical health; preservation of the natural environment; and the sacredness of interpersonal contracts. However a number of practitioners disagreed on the universality of environmental values, arguing that was an externally initiated value in the Chandpur TCDC project. One interviewee gave an example of collaboration across the religious/ secular divide regarding work against the sex trade. As one village informant said, and others implied: 'as human beings, there is more that unites us than divides us'. More philosophically, and returning to the West, many FBOs see themselves (e.g. Tyndale (2000), Myers (2011) and Mitchell (2017), section 2.3) as part of the post-Enlightenment era, sharing with secular organisations a respect for modern

science, and using its outputs in health care, agricultural practices and environmental understandings.

That villager comment quoted above – ‘there is more that unites us than divides us’ – implied an ethos of goodwill. Thinking theologically, two of my FBO interviewees and, in his writings, de Gruchy (2006), continued that theme, suggesting that people of goodwill have grasped the heart of God²⁵⁰. Those sources argued further that such people might be closer to God and to each other, regardless of religious labels, than to fellow-religionists who are stuck in doctrinaire exclusivism. Some villagers, despite their general antipathy to irreligious people indicated that those ‘who have good character, we can work with them if ... they love the people’. FBO interviewees spoke of seeking people of goodwill when setting up a project, and one affirmed strongly that there are many such people who ‘come out of the woodwork when you are there as a person of peace’. While that remark was in the context of relationships with recipients, the same principle applies over relationships with secular organisations, and aligns with what Rakodi (2011b) calls ‘lived religion’ (pp. 23f). That same spirit of seeking accord, although expressed differently, seemed to be assumed also among secular organisations (see chapter 6), and provides a powerful basis for connecting.

But to highlight differences again, the perceptions of common ground over ‘good morals’ vary between groups. As in chapter 2, some communities place greater emphasis than others on human rights, or interpret values in different ways, and some writers who champion the idea of universal values acknowledge there are local specificities. As one example on a broader scale, Chapter 2 noted the OIC’s (1990) Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, which Hashemi and Kureshi (2016) consider presents an alternative to the UDHR in matters relating to religious freedom, women’s rights and political authority.

Continuing this common-ground modification to the black-and-white picture of religion versus secularity, I could challenge the assertions of FBOs that through religion they connect with recipients at a hearts-and-minds level. Might that perception be too optimistic? Might the common ground be less than FBOs like to think? To start this discussion their stories as quoted earlier (especially section 6.5) were substantial and, for the Chandpur TCDC project, were corroborated well by both villagers and external observers, and the academic literature (especially section 2.6). Secondly, and modifying that view, later in this section I address the need for professionally competent work in addition to a religious connection, and note examples of lack of connection. Perhaps more importantly I described earlier, in chapter 2, and above in section 8.2.1 genuine ontological differences between religions. Similarly there are differences between cultures: what affinity can white Westerners, whose wealth and education greatly exceed that of almost all their recipient partner members; who have been

²⁵⁰ p. 141

brought up in a post-Enlightenment, scientifically informed world; have life expectancies in the 80s (LeDuc Media, 2017); and an autonomy that goes with Western liberal democracy, have with poor villagers with limitations in all those areas? Religion, even if it was the same as recipients', could not be expected to bridge that divide fully. The Chandpur TCDC project confirmed hesitations here, with villagers stating their confidence in the project team had been enhanced by having all visible project-manager personnel from Bangladesh. But even there, as explained above, there was a tendency for different faiths, or perhaps villager versus foreigner, to have different understandings of the primary emphases of the different religions. The varying degrees of understanding on these issues that emerged during the fieldwork question the extent to which there was a hearts-and-minds connection between Western FBOs and villagers. It would be easier to argue that had been achieved between the Western sponsoring FBO and the in-country implementing FBO, both of which were Christian, and all of whose personnel had a reasonable education. Or between the in-country implementing FBO and villagers, who share a language, history and culture. What is remarkable is the level of rapport – despite the differences – that had been established between the Western FBOs and villagers, including an assumption from both partners of a fair degree of common religious ground.

A further area of common ground occurs between FBOs and secular organisations, over the Western understandings they bring to development. As in section 6.4, one interviewee described how FBOs have, through their medical work, become unintentional but powerful agents of secularisation, in that their advocacy of Western scientific approaches challenges the need recipients feel for spiritual input to health: the same effect could be argued in agriculture. This matter is addressed later in section 8.2.1. It is noted here to record a further area of common ground between secular organisations and FBOs, while creating an unintended separation between FBOs and recipients. The FBOs that I met were aware of the issue and work to overcome it, as far as they were able and permitted by sponsors, thereby reinstating a separation from secular organisations.

Extending this to the process of establishing business arrangements for FBOs to work as agents of secular donors, donor guidelines typically allow or even promote working alongside FBOs, as there is much common ground in the Western development fraternity regarding what makes good development. So what an FBO sees as a religious activity – such as education, agriculture and health care – is seen by the donor as secular, and both parties can work productively with good synergy. That is a common mode of working. Its limitation is that the contract finishes at the end of the agreed common ground. This is likely to be satisfactory to the secular donor but as explained elsewhere, is a cause of frustration to the FBO.

In practice common ground is often assumed rather than explored and, as the villagers' surprise indicated, regarding the potential for partnering with secular development organisations, it might be assumed wrongly. Both secular and faith-based organisations advised (chapter 6) it was rare to find

groups whose values are so different they cannot work with them. A representative from one secular organisation stated '[my organisation] is definitely sensitive to local wishes', and asserted 'Good rapport can only happen if the underlying assumptions are expressed.' However his subsequent comments indicated his organisation had minimal contact with recipients and left it to local implementing partners to have that face-to-face dialogue. His lack of exploration of assumptions, which was common among secular people interviewed for this thesis, invites questions about the depth of partnership that has been achieved. The relationship could be based either on wrong assumptions or on a minimal highest common factor, with potentially a number of limitations, misunderstandings and dissatisfactions. This could be an area for further research.

Relationship building in practice

Introducing a further modification to a dichotomous view we could consider the practical process of establishing relationships. One interviewee view was that 'people who can't get into other people's heads and learn from them will tend to do a top-down push'. That comment is about listening and grass-roots level planning, and is not governed by religious views. Section 3.3 mentions Chambers' (1994b) concept of 'handing over the stick' (p. 1254), of giving recipients space to tell their own stories and build a sense of ownership of the project. One couple endorsed that need, adding: 'You've got to go to people, live amongst them, and learn from them without a programme ... [otherwise] you will never have those kind of [meaningful worldview-connecting] conversations'. That couple agreed that the long local history and reputation of Christian missionaries was, in their case, a valuable introduction, and that religious connections were crucial to rapport with both Christian church leaders and non-Christian local people. But that bond came with baggage and limited understanding, and they needed to work persistently over a period of time to establish their own relationships as trustworthy individuals, and to follow modern best-practice approaches to development. But now modifying further their views of the history and connection, my conversations with local people in the Chandpur TCDC project area did not demonstrate they understood a Christian worldview in any depth, not beyond comments like 'Christians do good things and there is no corruption': perhaps reflecting the villagers' emphasis on religion as being about morality and ethics. The story of establishing the Chandpur TCDC project, as described in chapter 4, demonstrates there were significant uncertainties of intent and pockets of distrust that took some effort and time to overcome before the project could proceed: whatever points of connection they had, the project team were still outsiders who had to work to earn the trust of the target communities. As a further warning against a blasé or enthusiast approach, McGregor et al. (2012) document cases where religious institutions – admittedly, churches themselves, more than FBOs – have shown 'little inclination to engage with the unfamiliar processes ... of the development industry' (p. 1144). One secular interviewee described values of 'impartiality, neutrality, independence' as important. He implied those values were distinctive to secular organisations and, while that claim is

considered misleading by FBOs (see sections 2.6 and 3.2), all donors and practitioners endorse the need to engage with recipients in a way that enhances their substantive input. So religion is not a magic wand that overrides the need for good professional planning and execution. Industry best-practices for project initiation and implementation, especially of local empowerment, are still required if the partners are to develop confidence in each other and work together for sustainable outcomes.

An extension to this is to ask about the degree of rapport secular organisations could achieve by good management practice, without sharing religious belief. Respect, and Chambers' (1994b) 'handing over the stick' (p. 1254) would go some way. The goal according to Wilkins (2002) and Melkote (2002) (see section 3.3) is to generate social change, and that kind of ground-level engagement is a necessary component of this. But, as in section 6.2, one FBO interviewee considered that if you don't share the religious views of the recipient community 'you still get categorised ... as an infidel.' The respect you show them 'would be of some assistance but ... [it] won't open the sort of doors that I have found'. At the least, the hurdle is higher.

As recorded through chapters 6 and 7, some interviewees raised a further practical issue, regarding varying responses depending on differences between levels of power. Tensions between opinions people expressed to me suggested that generally the higher levels of government, which see a big picture of national development, have less concern about proselytising than do middle management. Likewise grassroots villagers, who had come to know and trust the FBO workers, had little concern about religious conversions. The grouping that was most concerned was community mid-level leaders, who had neither the benefit of knowing well the FBO workers nor the big national picture, and felt their own positions were threatened by the developments. This fear also applied to their attitudes to grassroots-led programmes which challenged the hierarchical patron-client structures that have brought social stability and dominated societal interactions. This presents a mixed picture and emphasises the need for both early and continuing dialogue.

Further practical issues arise over the theme of empowerment, or agency. As stated previously, FBO representatives consider empowerment fits their theology of seeing humanity made 'in the image of God', and my interviews documented ways in which they had striven to achieve this; empowerment was also a theme in interviews with secular interviewees. Further, as in sections 1.2, 2.8 and 3.2, since the 1980s empowerment has been recognised in development theory as a core goal. At this point I note that the Chandpur TCDC villagers needed to be persuaded that empowerment was a worthwhile goal. That fact – the need for persuasion – raises two more theoretical concerns which I will return to later in this chapter, in section 8.2.1 under the heading of *proselytising and transformation*, and in section 8.2.2 under the heading of *agency*.

In my interviews, villagers expressed strongly their tolerance of people of other religions. However regarding the development project, some also stated: 'Yes, in the beginning we had suspicion' about pressure to convert to Christianity, and that only subsided over time: when conversions 'did not happen ... we grew to trust them more'. One informant described another situation where there was an unspoken acceptance of a stable religious milieu which would be disturbed if people changed their faith allegiances. For the Chandpur TCDC it is likely that the arrival of the development project created a concern about disturbing that status quo and challenging the community equilibrium, and revealed possibly hidden undercurrents of prejudice. The project initiators addressed this at the start of the work, calling the religious fraternities together and enabling them to find many points of commonality. Over time this evolved into what villagers commonly expressed and project managers endorsed as the key outcome of the project – not incomes, skills, or even education – but improved understanding and respect between the religious faiths. By the time I conducted my fieldwork, some nine years after initiation, the project had stimulated community relationships that were closer than what had existed pre-project.

Exceptions

A further question to put to the two-pole typology of religious versus non-religious groups is about how well more passionate religious adherents of any persuasion might fit the pictures of tolerance and fraternity. As in section 6.4 the Chandpur TCDC communities included one village where strong suspicion was expressed early on about a conversion agenda, and this concern was reputed to have continued throughout the project. On the other hand, in another project, one interviewee described a situation where he was visited by people who were known as passionate Islamists and were opposing foreign development organisations. They told him 'we know who you are [i.e. Christian] and we've got no problems with that'. On that occasion the concern from the supposed extremists was with people who had no religion and not with people of a different faith. A further adjustment to the picture came from Richard who talked of working in a community where there had been a long history of injustice and oppression from colonisers who were seen as Christian. In those situations he conceded close connections can take a long time to establish and there is much distrust to unlearn. Finally, to look at this point from the opposite direction, Richard and Sam told stories of encounters with people of goodwill from different faith traditions, and considered they have more in common with them than with what they called 'fundamentalists' from their own Christian traditions.

A different aberration and an anomaly arose through the role of FBOs as agents of secularisation (see section 6.4, and earlier in section 8.2.1). This was an unintended consequence of the use of Western science in medicine and agriculture, where FBOs, by decreasing reliance on the spiritual world, have been a powerful force for secularising the less developed world. By unintentionally implying they regard a Western secular view as an adequate explanation for life, some FBO practitioners

considered they have run counter to village cultural and spiritual beliefs and erected barriers to communication with recipients. The FBOs' underlying theologies support physical and scientific explanations for many of life's events, and in practice they compromise their holistic theologies by often ignoring the 'middle spiritual ground' (chapter 2). Conversely it has created common ground with secularists.

So on the question of widespread tolerance and fraternity from religious groups, this research gave conflicting messages.

Secularity accepting religious discussions

Another modifying colour to a black-and-white view of connections through religion is over secular acceptance of religious discussions. When talking about recipients, as noted in chapter 6, some interviewees from secular organisations made comments like 'we very much want to reflect and respect those ... [religious] worldviews, if they are particularly spiritual in the countries in which we work', and 'We are not a faith organisation ... [but] it doesn't mean that we don't engage with [religion]'. In the context of talking about religion, another asserted '[my organisation] is definitely sensitive to local wishes'. So at least they express tolerance. Then, as quoted earlier, one went further, declaring that 'Good rapport can only happen if the underlying assumptions are expressed'. However I consider there were some caveats to those assertions. Firstly, and most obviously, they expressed no sympathy for engaging over religion with Western FBOs who they might be funding to implement their projects, or who might be associated with them as colleagues in the field. While we need to be cautious about arguments from silence, that matches the experience of my FBO interviewees who considered they found a high barrier when trying to engage with MFAT over religion. That lack of engagement provides safeguards for the purposes of the secular partner while reducing a sense of fulfilment to the FBO, and adds legitimacy to the FBO dissatisfaction. One interviewee described his high level of frustration at having the input of religion ignored in one country despite it providing the nationally dominant medical service: he considered religious people had been side-lined, written off as 'religious nutters'. Similarly chapter 2 documents the exasperations of FBOs as they are treated only as instruments for donors' agendas and have no substantive input to the programmes.

Secondly, the conversations between me and secular organisations contained conditional words like 'if they are particularly spiritual' and 'it doesn't mean we don't engage', and one indicated religious belief was something they can work around. Two interviewees, in seeking for a 'shared agenda', mentioned only peace and social justice. In practice, then, secular organisations' engagement with recipients over religion was superficial compared to that of FBOs, and their expressions of willingness were contradicted by their actions. They might believe they are connecting well with the religious and spiritual views of their recipient counterparts while being unaware of a profound lack of

communication. From my own experience, both sides of a discussion, on sensitive topics, respond to subtle signals that either encourage or discourage engagement and, in this case, I consider the lack of intentionality by secular organisations discouraged engagement on religion. The partners can partition their discussions, intentionally avoiding deeply-held views, despite the importance of these views to their understanding of the project – or perhaps because of their importance – and not sharing them with people they feel are out of tune with them.

A third caveat is that I inferred from the context that one person considered her organisation, by being secular, was in a position to engage more broadly than would an FBO with stated roots. This fits claims in the literature (see chapter 2) of some seeing secularity as neutral ground: that point was addressed in section 2.6 and 3.2, and elsewhere in this chapter.

In conclusion on this topic of secular acceptance of religious discussions, we see an attitude of sometimes dismissive tolerance by secular organisations in their dealings with recipients, but not empathy or engagement; and we see intolerance towards the religious views of FBOs.

Avoiding religion

Recognising the importance of religious connection to establishing good relationships in development, it is important to ask why some parties often avoid discussing religion.

As stated earlier in this chapter Chandpur TCDC villagers said ‘I don’t want to accept any unknown person’. There was fear of the behaviours of irreligious people: ‘They will take our money and run away!’ Further responses suggest there might also have been fear of secularity as a philosophy, and its potential to disrupt their understanding of the world, to destroy social cohesion and to demote moral values (chapter 6). In this research any softening of the concerns of those people assumed that either the role of secular organisations would be limited to supplying physical infrastructure, or the villagers would be protected by an umbrella from Western FBOs. Conversely a reason stated for acceptance of a Christian FBO in a predominantly Muslim community was a long and largely untarnished history of Christianity in the project area. This suggests fear of the unknown could be one reason for silence between recipients and secular donors on the subject of religion.

Looking at secular organisations, as noted earlier, one FBO worker described ways in which he had ‘opened the door for some discussion’ with a secular donor about religion, but the donor had not accepted the invitation. This avoidance of religion seemed typical of secular organisations, both in policy and practice, despite a likelihood, drawing on the statistics on religiosity and spirituality in the West (see section 2.2), that a large number of people within Western secular development organisations have a religious affiliation or at least some understanding of and sympathy for religious positions. This research has also shown that antipathy to religious proselytising by FBOs has led to blanket rules from secular donors that inhibit what FBOs see as holistic and sustainable

development, and to little or no discussion on these issues between secular and faith-based organisations.

Reasons for this avoidance were not clear in this research. There has been a long history of disagreements in broader Western society between some religious views and modern science (section 2.6). Secular organisations possibly still retain the view (section 2.6) that religion can be put in a box that says: 'This is for private use only'. As in Duff et al. (2016) (see section 2.7), Governmental organisations are particularly afraid of political and electoral backlashes from the potential for being seen to fund religious activities, and they create a clear space between religion and their own views on development. The evidence of this research (chapter 2 and chapter 6) would be that avoidance of religion comes at least partly from a limited understanding of the nature and ethos of FBOs. The lack of communication could also come from a conviction that secularism is important and therefore discussion should avoid religion: so avoidance becomes a form of coercion, to maintain control of the development agenda; or the alternative assumption that religion's unimportance to secular organisations is common for recipients as well; or that confining discussion to seemingly non-religious activities could lead to satisfactory outcomes in areas such as health and agriculture, without reference to religion; or simply ignorance of the lack of connection. Another phenomenon could be what Matheson (2006) (section 2.6) saw as a 'muzzling' of religion (p. 187), with people using religion as 'a screen for other, more tangible realities with which they are familiar: power struggles, political agendas, psychological proclivities, or whatever' (p. 185).

Villager reactions in this research suggest that for some it is likely they have never thought of the possibility of irreligious people working in development, and there is no need to raise the topic. However as in an anecdote recorded at the start of chapter 1, a spokesperson for another project talked about risk: knowing something of the different worldviews, they would rather have a limited scope of development that provided part of what they wanted, than, by talking about their beliefs, expose themselves to ridicule and discourage secular donors. Paraphrasing one recipient, while they are convinced of the validity of their own views, it is hard to explain these to a secular Westerner, and the easy route is to avoid a potentially complicating issue²⁵¹.

For all parties avoidance could be about communication difficulties, steering away from the effort of communicating around religious concepts or jargon.

Looking at FBOs, a number of them reported that with recipients, in some circumstances, they had refrained initially from discussions about religion or worldview assumptions, but later, when relationships had achieved a greater level of mutual trust and confidence, they had engaged in

²⁵¹ For example Narayan, Patel, et al. (2000, pp. 8, 22) point out the distrust that poor people have in governments, NGOs and anyone in power.

discussions and debates with recipient partners. One FBO interviewee, who was less theologically reflective than others, tended to be more cautious about instigating religious discussions, and had fewer such discussions. I suspect that person's hesitancy was apparent through subtle signals, creating a barrier to worldview conversations. But most FBO personnel reported they do not try to discuss worldviews with secular donors, either early or late. They know the donors' requirements of separation of religion from what the donors see as development, and they have had no responses to previous attempts to explore this area. The FBOs have chosen to avoid religion because of both the difficulty of talking across worldview gaps, and the risk of alienating their donors

Fear of the unknown is a potential reason for lack of dialogue. Carleton (2016b) argues that 'fear of the unknown [or 'intolerance of uncertainty' (2016a, p. 5)] may be a, or possibly the, fundamental fear' (p. 39). This questions the depth to which secular organisations might be anti-religion per se, versus being against some potential but unknown outcomes of religion-based development. Some softening of their opposition when I delved into the topic suggests there is at least an element of ignorance in their views. In the case of the recipients, the almost universal adherence to religion in less developed countries might allow less room for tolerance. Further, as evidenced by the villagers' support for local Bangladeshis as project managers suggests that fear of outsiders in general, rather of their religion explicitly, could be a real phenomenon. In this, FBOs have more insider connections with recipients than do secular organisations especially in the case of Chandpur TCDC.

Considering the offshore fieldwork for this research, and the extent to which FBOs might contribute to a pool of anxiety, villagers' attitudes were informative. In the Chandpur TCDC there was a long history of exposure to Christians as fellow-villagers, and respect for them: Muslims, Christians and Hindus were 'so good friends', said two villagers, and another said 'Christian people ... their character is always good'. However the predominantly Muslim recipient community was hesitant about the new phenomenon of a Christian FBO leading a development project, being concerned about pressure for religious conversion, a change in the status quo (section 6.4). It took open discussion at project initiation, and some further years of experience before the bulk of those fears dissipated. Surveys some years into project implementation (sections 6.4, 6.5) revealed a key outcome of the project was greater cross-religion respect and acceptance than had existed before the project, providing evidence of both ignorance having produced fear, and of dialogue and exposure having provided an antidote. Interviews with FBO representatives showed that the initial level of comfort in relating to recipients can sometimes be high, and the Chandpur TCDC has shown that that level of comfort can be improved still further. So through the Chandpur TCDC project the Christian FBOs had both increased anxiety among the villagers, and had been a means of reducing it.

We could argue that, for FBOs, where fear might be a factor, it might be fear of the known rather than the unknown. In general they are aware of the views of their secular partners, and the

potential hazard, in engaging with them, of losing funding and other support. FBO contributors to this research are also aware of the worldviews of their recipient partners, and the potential to talk past each other through different understandings of Western science, and to alienate them through engaging too quickly with people who have had a bad history with Christian proselytisers or Western colonialists. The evidence from this research is that the low level of fear of a foreign religion that existed in recipients was overcome with exposure to people of that religion and an open dialogue about issues of concern.

Looking further at secular partners and Western FBOs, their common base in philosophies of the Western Enlightenment could be assumed to create one strong link in the relationship triangle, with Western FBOs having a substantial insider connection with Western secular organisations. One secular interviewee agreed 'a shared agenda ... enables people of like mind to work together effectively', indicating an initial assumed level of accord could be improved further by dialogue. So in principle that supports religious dialogue with FBOs. In practice however, for that person, who chose to see religion as a minor element, a 'shared agenda' did not need to include religious connections, and the tag 'fear of the unknown' might still apply. Looking at the secular-donor-to-FBO link, there is a clear need for dialogue to lessen Carleton's (2016b) 'fundamental fear' (p. 39) of uncertainty. FBO interviewees were aware of this reluctance, and had confronted it in unsuccessful attempts to engage on religion with secular funders.

This issue of fear of the unknown arose in field discussions. Potentially it could speak powerfully to the theme of this research, and I have introduced it here and made some brief and tentative comments. A fuller examination is outside the scope of this thesis, but I note it as possibly an important contributor to our understanding of connections in international development. For management of the phenomenon, it might be important to explore further the range of fears of villagers.

Other issues

Other questions could add further interesting tints to the picture although it is out of scope for this thesis to explore them, and they could be the subject of separate research or papers.

- What is the role and attitude of religious people who work for secular development organisations? One author (chapter 3) wrote of FBOs having 'schizophrenia' in their internal organisational debates about the place of proselytising in their development work. Similarly I wonder if people with religious faith, who work for secular organisations, might also be schizophrenic as they try to juggle their own religious views and values with the firm secularity of their organisations.

- The preceding discussion portrays a fair degree of homogeneity in each of my three categories. However, among the villagers I interviewed, there were different attitudes to working with people with no religion, with some adamant they would not, in any circumstance work with them, while another said 'If I am a beggar I will accept help from anyone'. The FBO sample I used revealed minor variations around attitudes to engaging with recipients over religion, and chapter 3 describes a wider range of ethos among FBOs. As de Gruchy says (2006, p. 58): religions are not 'an undifferentiated mass'. The secular organisations I interviewed ranged from those who concentrated on economics, to others with strong emphases on human rights issues, and chapter 2 demonstrated differences between secular organisations in their policies regarding religious input to development programmes. So while there is enough similarity to validate my three-party typology, that could also mask many variations.
- We could look at differences between FBOs and their parent organisations, and the fluidity in their views. Two FBO informants expressed theological differences from their home-base churches (see section 6.5), with the possibility of a significant disconnect, and others alluded to the same. This emphasises further the heterogeneity of FBOs, and the flexibility of their worldviews as they learn from their experience and wrestle with the implications. This demonstrates further the multi-coloured picture of international development.
- Another question is whether religious strife is always about religion. In the Chandpur TCDC, one local worker noted apparently religious opposition to the project from mid-level community leaders, and explained: 'if [village people] become educated well ... they will demand their rights'. The project dissenters, he considered, were seeking personal gain and 'They use religion as tools'. In another incident in Bangladesh we could argue whether the disagreement was religious or cultural: in the course of its work a Muslim NGO was 'bringing out the women from the home', and the FBO worker whom I interviewed considered the community was not ready for that cultural change: 'people sometimes try to create problems from the back of this thing'. Community leaders, on the grounds that the organisation, in doing good, must be secretly Christian, brought religion into their opposition. In the case of the Chandpur TCDC, project staff considered these kinds of opposition were from the level of off-site mid-level community leaders, who were out of touch with the villagers and their affirmations of the project; but also, in contrast to national leaders, close enough to the project to see a threat to their own positions.

Proselytising and transformation

As in section 7.3 one FBO interviewee quoted from his organisation's *Statement of faith*: 'We do not proselytise ... However, we are always willing to share our thoughts when asked'. He was adamant

‘we’re not proselytising [in that] we don’t use the money to put Bibles in people’s hands and get them to respond to us in a certain way’. In a mix of views he said he would love to see all the people he was working with become ‘followers of Jesus’, but he would not want them to become Christian in the Western cultural understandings of that term, and he was opposed to them adopting the label *Christian* as that would disrupt community cohesion. In practice his style is overt, talking freely about his beliefs in the traditional teachings on who Jesus is and advocating values and lifestyle practices that he sees as distinctively Christian. Others talked of belief in the traditional Christian view of Jesus as being part of a more sustainable and holistic change. One, in a typical statement (see section 7.3), talked about that theology ‘bringing people out of a place of oppression or injustice, being marginalised, abused ... giving people dignity’.

Those comments are about spreading religious understanding, and that mix of views was common among the FBO interviews for this research, with variations on how and when they advocate distinctively Christian beliefs about God.

Non-religious proselytising was another topic of conversation. One secular interviewee stated ‘secular agencies run afoul of this as well. You see that with the human rights agenda’, and others would add (e.g. Lynch and Schwarz, 2016, p. 644) agendas regarding neoliberal economic theories and even the mantra of participatory planning. That interviewee accepted that Western cultural agendas can ‘limit their ability to engage with parties’. FBOs joined in pushing those not-explicitly religious ideas. For example, staff from the Chandpur TCDC explained (sections 5.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 7.2) that one aim of the project was to instil hope, confidence and motivation, and that required a significant worldview change. From these discussions I consider FBOs push those worldviews more vigorously than they push religious conversion. One person summarised that ‘Everyone’s proselytising a set of beliefs and values onto someone else’.

Looking further at interventions that were not overtly religious, one person noted (section 7.3) an anomalous comment that ‘The most powerful secularising force in the world is Christian mission’. By excluding the middle spiritual ground, for example with modern Western medical understandings about health, FBOs have implied a lack of relevance of spiritual values, and by their prevalence in frontline development FBOs have had a powerful global influence. Further examples were raised by two secular practitioners. One was regarding gender and violence against women. Reflecting that indigenous attitudes to human rights might be based on religion or sorcery my informant said ‘one has to work within ... those constructs to see if one can achieve change ... using a rights-based approach’. In a similar situation, but with regard to sickness based on a curse, another person advocated providing ‘educational spaces to discuss it in a different way’. She considered that enabled her organisation to resolve the illness ‘without challenging the spiritual belief’. The second worker was advocating a different paradigm to deal with illness, and the first was attempting

ontological change by an oblique approach rather than a frontal challenge. In effect, despite their protestations, both were seeking significant modifications to religious worldviews. An FBO with a similar indirect approach, in this case to skill development to reduce a culture of dependency, acknowledged that was intended to lead to an in-depth change in worldview. Finally I note from chapter 2 the asserted potential for ‘cultural imperialism’ where, according to Boyle (1998), the long-held mantra of participatory development, or bottom-up planning, could be considered an alien practice in cultures that value hierarchies. As explained in section 2.8 patron-client theory would endorse that view. However, contrary to that theory, participatory planning seemed to be welcomed by recipients in the Chandpur TCDC. This supposedly Western view seemed to be striking a common human chord of valuing empowerment and increasing capability, with only one village being somewhat out of tune. This topic is addressed further in the next section, 8.2.2.

To bring a different flavour, story boxes 4, regarding latrines, and 9, regarding fertility and child health, told of situations where FBOs introduced new religious teachings to intervene in particular local health needs. Another interviewee (section 7.3), regarding the value of educating children, challenged the belief in karma, saying; ‘the community needs to make that shift ... It’s a really important conversation that must take place because otherwise it will hamstring everything’. A further example (section 7.3) was for a Christian FBO to enlist and apply the teachings of local religions to alter worldviews on fatalism as part of a programme to combat HIV/AIDS.

Box 9: Infertility and child health

A medical missionary informed me of a Melanesian couple who had struggled with infertility, but produced a daughter after the district nurse, who was Christian, prayed for them. Later, the nurse encouraged them to feed the child solids from four months but the parents refused as that broke a local taboo and they feared nearby spirits would choke the child. Choosing to address the situation as a spiritual issue the nurse explained that Jesus was more powerful than any local spirit and would protect the child. The parents accepted that argument, and everyone saw how she flourished – until she contracted malaria and pneumonia. Unusually for that area, she survived, because of her greater body mass and stores of fat. That event led to a change in the culture of the whole village.

These incidents reinforce the opinion quoted in section 7.3 that ‘all of the development activities are a proselytisation of someone’s beliefs and values’.

This discussion brings attention to two key substantive issues. The first is about the acceptability of advocating change in the worldviews of people, and the second is about the degree of pressure that is brought to bear to seek change. I address also a semantic issue about terminology.

Looking at the first point, the literature reviews in chapters 2 and 3 raised the same issues as the fieldwork. The variety of approaches of FBOs that I interviewed fits the activities of three categories of Bradley’s (2013) and Clarke’s (2008) five-part typology of FBOs (section 3.1), namely: ‘organisations which mobilise the faithful in support of the poor, ... organisations which ... mobilise

social groups ... in pursuit of broader political objectives ... [and] missionary organisations who ... seek to convert non-believers' (Bradley, 2013, p. 14). However the variety also reinforces the discomfort that others acknowledged over those categorisations, as support for the poor, political advocacy and faith-teaching spread across all FBOs that I interviewed: the differences were more in specifics of situations and personal style than in organisational policy.

As described in chapters 2 and 3, in the IFRC Code, New Zealand's CID, and policies of other governmental or multilateral funders, a prominent recurring theme is the need to treat the religious views of recipients with 'respect'. That word is open to a variety of interpretations. Combining that literature with feedback from interviewees (e.g. chapter 6) the meanings range from, at one end, avoiding the subject of religion, thereby leaving recipients to practice their own religion without discussion with outside parties; through to having open debates about differences in belief. Secular organisations I interviewed tended towards the former approach. One argument seems to be that, recognising the importance of religion to recipients, and its sensitivity, practitioners and donors should leave the subject alone. It could be that the secular organisations' own discomfort with religion, perhaps a fear of the unknown, leads them to put it aside. This discomfort could be formed from a long history of tension since the Enlightenment, with disagreements between religion, the political establishment and science (e.g. Barton, 2018, p. 370f). It could also be that they are aware of local attitudes toward secularism and atheism, and are fearful that a discussion on religious views could lead there. They could then be accused of proselytising although, from the reactions of villagers in Chandpur TCDC, their views would be so incomprehensible as to have little chance of success. Alternatively they might assume that the irrelevance they attribute to the subject could be extended to the other parties. Or, where government funds are involved, avoidance of religion is described as a response to the doctrine of separation of church and state, and there could be a concern over potential political consequences of being seen to dabble in religion.

In contrasting recognition of the importance of religion to recipients and FBOs, my interviews (chapters 5 to 7) not only demonstrated the relevance of religion to recipients and FBOs, but also highlighted the significance to them of engaging with them on the subject. Further, over the last two decades, the importance of religion to recipients was highlighted (e.g. section 2.7) in the World Bank- and DFID-funded studies and a lot of other research, and push-back against that seems to be almost non-existent in the literature. The approach of the secular organisations that I interviewed does not fit well with best practice advocated in published literature: it seems to aim for an assumed highest common factor, often material welfare, and misses the opportunity to engage at a more far-reaching relational level. Typifying the struggle is the conflict within DFID. As in section 2.7 it advocates for greater collaboration with religious organisations and the religious views of recipients, and provides (e.g. DFID, 2012) helpful guidelines on how to achieve that; but it appears that in practice FBOs,

acting as its agents, are still largely only instrumental and their distinctive religious views do not help shape programmes. This research showed that if Western donors and practitioners want to relate better to their recipient partners there is a need for both a philosophical debate on the role of religion in society and, more specifically, international development; and for practical action to foster better processes of connecting.

Continuing the topic of *respect*, the second approach – of open engagement and debate – was typical of FBOs that I interviewed, particularly in situations where long-term relationships and trust had been established²⁵². That approach is supported by a few arguments. Firstly it sets the context, acknowledging the importance of religion to recipient parties, and their wish to engage on the subject: so on that assumption, respect requires engagement. As one interviewee said ‘For people there [talking religion] is like breathing, and would you avoid breathing?’ Secondly, regarding effects, it leads to wide areas of agreement between the parties, including across different religious affiliations, creating a base for trusting relationships. In Chandpur TCDC, project initiation included representatives of the three main faiths meeting and agreeing on their religion-based values about development goals, for example for women and children. This strengthened the work of the project in these areas. One could expect FBOs in expressing their religious beliefs, including advocating their particular beliefs, to enhance their credibility with recipients. Thirdly – another effect – it allows integration of religious or spiritual elements into project design and implementation, creating, in the eyes of recipients and FBOs, a more holistic transformation. Chandpur TCDC and the note above of combating HIV/AIDS illustrate this point. Finally – a further effect – this engagement facilitates deeper transformation of values and, in all the cases quoted, all parties have agreed this has proved helpful for project outcomes. The alternative of showing respect by not engaging over religion is tending towards Hart’s (2011) ‘generous and unreflective syncretism’ (p. 2). Expressions by secular organisations of the lack of importance of the subject have been described by Hart (2011) as ‘religious beliefs confidently delivered by persons who have made no discernible effort to ascertain what those beliefs actually are’ (p. 9).

This discussion on the meaning of *respect*, and the practice of it, while important and potentially controversial, is an entrée to the more fundamental issue around proselytising: that of justice. Here some tension is inevitable. On one hand donors and practitioners work with recipient groups to help them progress, whatever might be meant by that term, and the helpers come with assumptions about beliefs, attitudes and practices that make good development, and they would like to see those adopted. In anything other than a short term or arms-length engagement, adopting those beliefs

²⁵² Open debate fits with Karl Popper’s promotion, quoted in The Press (Harvie, 2019), of airing intolerant views: ‘I do not imply ... that we should suppress the utterance of intolerant philosophies; as long as we can counter them ...’.

and practices will include changes in worldviews. On the other hand, outsiders are in a position of power and can apply, even unintentionally and subtly, significant pressure on recipients to change substantially their beliefs and assumptions about how the world works. Regarding processes, key decisions on development projects tend to be made early before there have been opportunities to grow trust and explore underlying attitudes and philosophies. As practitioners say (e.g. section 7.3), it can often take years to establish a hearts-and-minds rapport. Exacerbating the appearance of injustice is that learnings and worldview adjustments are generally expected to be one-way, i.e. by the recipient²⁵³. Some authors on development issues (see section 2.1.6) make strong accusations of injustice by secular organisations in insisting recipients adopt a secular worldview, even where that insistence is done in silence by omitting alternatives.

Proselytising is an emotive term, used popularly to describe pressure to change religions, and is 'arguably the prickliest subject in the emerging field of religion and development' (Fountain, 2015, p. 80). Earlier (section 3.2) I defined proselytising as: *attempting to change the worldview of another party: especially, in development, donors and practitioners attempting to change the worldview of a recipient partner*. Two key elements of that definition were the notion of deliberate attempts to change; and the word *worldview*, meaning something deeper than cultural expressions. Depending on their definition people can claim (sections 7.2 and 7.3) both that they do not proselytise, and that everyone proselytises. A term that might be more helpful is *transformational development*, which is about encouraging people to change their minds, worldviews, attitudes or habits. It is more elemental than acquiring new skills or receiving new infrastructure. Similar to *proselytising*, it is tied closely to people's understandings of the nature of poverty, and its causes and solutions (sections 2.12 2.3 and 5.3), but is less pejorative than *proselytising*. So far it is used mainly by religious writers, to describe their views of change, as Myers (2011) says: 'seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually' (p. 3). It is intentional and deep. The term would also describe, and is sometimes used to describe change programmes sought by secular organisations as it can be used to encourage new approaches in areas like economic philosophies, human rights agendas, political empowerment and environmental practices, or instilling attitudes such as hope and confidence. These are also far-reaching and intentional, and are embraced also by many FBOs.

²⁵³ Looking in the opposite direction, i.e. at changing worldviews of people in Western countries, one worker, claiming to be talking for a number of Western development organisations, said 'We are a collection of NGOs that does try to influence the way ... we see the world in terms of development'. Another worker stated emphatically: 'I would never have thought 30 years ago that I would believe what I now believe'. These modifications in worldviews could not be called proselytising as they are the incidental outcome of exposure to views of other people, rather than of a deliberate plan for change. Feener and Fountain (2018) address this reverse change extensively.

As noted earlier under proselytising, a second substantive issue was about pressure to change. The FBOs I interviewed were adamant they did not pressure people to change religious beliefs or affiliations. This is important to the matter of justice. Earlier (section 3.2) I quoted Lunn (2009) as saying: 'People who are poor and desperate can be more vulnerable to [evangelism and conversion]' (p. 944); and Ndiaye (2006) as endorsing that. However all FBOs that I interviewed claimed firmly that, for them, and specifically for religious transformations, despite considering these to be important ingredients of holistic and sustainable change, there is no coercion about changing beliefs, and they were 'not threatening'. These 'non-threatening' discussions (section 6.5) can be robust. One interviewee, in an experience that seems widespread among the FBOs I interviewed talked of arguing theology for hours in a teashop and being invited to return and continue; and another of having 'debates with Muslim leaders on different aspects of the Koran or the Bible'. Another said that a different lifestyle practised by Christian FBOs 'transforms the world's questions', disturbing its way of thinking towards something that is more sustainable, through stimulating queries about people's understanding of the nature of God. Another considered 80% of these sorts of discussions were initiated by the recipients. All were in the context of trust having been formed, and some were also in situations where long-term relationships had been developed. According to these accounts, far from being reluctant participants, recipients relished the opportunities to talk religion and appeared to see themselves as equal partners. The scope of my interviews with recipient villagers was too limited and language barriers too high to be able to explore this topic, but it would be a valuable matter to take further.

Of my two substantive proselytising issues – the acceptability of advocating change, and pressure to change – the question of coercion would seem to be agreed: that tying aid to a change in worldview, or using a position of power to enforce such a change, is an injustice, regardless of whether the change is explicitly religious or is about a secular philosophy.

On the other issue – of whether worldview changes should be sought at all – there is some dispute. In this research the criticisms against FBOs for seeking change were countered by three arguments. Firstly the FBOs – both in published literature and through my interviews – argue that a change in worldview is important to sustainable development, and that change will include but not be limited to a growth in theology, in people's understandings of the nature of God and the implications of that for lifestyles. Secondly FBOs generally consider that, depending on circumstances, a robust and non-coercive dialogue between recipients and FBOs grows credibility with recipients, and benefits relationships and development projects. Thirdly FBO people whom I interviewed and various writers whom I quoted have levelled a charge at secular development organisations that in their advocacy of secular assumptions they can be more aggressive and culturally inappropriate – more coercive – than FBOs. I discovered only limited indications of how secular organisations might respond to the charge

of coercion that is put against them, and that would be a valuable line of further enquiry. It is possible that the discomfort of secular organisations with proselytising is from either ignorance of the realities, or their own worldview assumptions rather than about FBO malpractice. This topic – of whether worldview changes should be sought at all – is core to the theoretical arguments over post-secularity that follow shortly.

With all that background we can now look at responses to actual or potential religious conversions: at Fountain's 'prickliest subject'. In Bangladesh, one local person quoted a case where Muslim children in a Christian school were seen carrying Bibles around, and that had been sufficiently concerning to lead to the school having its NGO registration cancelled by the government. However for a different response an FBO worker told of one situation where a staff member had converted from Islam to Christianity, and there was no problem with him continuing to work among Muslim people as the community acknowledged he was doing good work. It is possible that the different responses might have been influenced by the age of the participants, with people being concerned that children were more open to unfair influence. But in another situation this same FBO worker's team had been accused of using aid to make religious converts and the team left the work location for a time because of a threat of attack from Islamic fundamentalists. The FBO worker claimed the accusation was false, and considered the opposition was about politics and money rather than religion. He successfully enlisted the support of the heads of the local police and a madrasa, who endorsed enthusiastically the way his team was doing its work, and he was able to reactivate the project. So the opposition to proselytising might have been confused with different currents and agendas. A local person explained that Bangladesh's constitution allows preaching and advocacy of all religions, and permits people to change religion freely. In practice, however, he considered attitudes at village level were more constrained: it would be permissible to change from Hinduism or Christianity to other religions, but 'at the community level ... it's not OK to convert to Christianity for the Muslim': that would be 'a big issue'. This opinion might conflict with a generally expressed village tolerance of other religions, or alternatively it could be that the current village tolerance is just of the status quo, while changes to religious identity are treated with disapproval. Looking outside Bangladesh, as in section 7.3, another FBO worker advised of a situation where 'there is a strong set of unwritten rules around ... stealing each other's sheep'. But 'As the relationship develops you create a safer space ... where you actually disagree, and to debate and to challenge each other or ... teach each other about our belief systems'.

I conclude that religious conversion remains a sensitive issue in development projects, with potential for contradictions between official policies and on-the-ground actions, and local particularities being as important as high-level attitudes. This research provides fuel to the fire of secular fears about FBOs proselytising their religious beliefs. But that fear needs to be put into the context of positive

gains in trusting relationships by engaging in cross-religious discussions, and the potential for these discussions to lead to deeper partnerships that work towards sustainable holistic development. That fear also needs to be put in the context of endemic secular proselytising. One could use this situation to support the no-proselytising rule of most secular funders. But in the light of the research presented here, and if *no-proselytising* is taken to mean no arguing or no discussing of religion, that seems an uninformed and unhelpful reaction. More legitimately, given the importance of religious belief to FBOs and most recipients, my research could be used to emphasise the need for discretion but boldness in discussing religion and in seeking conversion of aspects of worldviews.

I conclude, also, that secular proselytising, while less sensitive to Western ears is, in its effect, an issue of greater concern in development than proselytising that is explicitly religious. It is more radical to less developed communities, more subtle to Westerners, and often more insistent.

8.2.2 Agency

Chapter 2 described *agency* as the ability of recipients to make or influence decisions that affect their development, their freedom for self-determination. It is about empowerment, the capability to act, being unshackled from dependency. Boley et al. (2015) describe it as ‘where members of a community are active agents of change and they have the ability to find solutions to their problems, make decisions, implement actions and evaluate their solutions’ (p112). It can include psychological components, where people increase in pride and self-esteem; social components, where community cohesion and collaboration are increased; and political components, where people have ‘agency or control over the direction of ... development within their community’, or gain ‘mastery of their affairs’ (p114). This thesis considers how literature and fieldwork inform the potential for different views on this topic among the participants in development, and different development agendas.

As introduced in section 1.2, for Westerners since the 1980s, empowerment has been a dominating paradigm in the development discourse and it has become, at least in theory, a non-negotiable goal in Western development plans. This theme was expounded further in section 2.8; and fieldwork, as in section 5.1.2, revealed more contours to the theme.

Chapter 2 described further how Western agendas for agency and empowerment, and their associate of capacity building, can conflict with recipient community values. One reason is the hierarchical structures to human society that are often assumed in non-Western societies, which can be disturbed by the individuality that often comes with capacity building. A caution from my fieldwork came from Sam (section 7.3) who described how development can have a negative impact in that people can be ‘separated out from the community’, rising from the pack to lead, and disrupting what had been cohesive communities. This aligns with Boley et al. (2015) and Hofstede (1984), who point out that collectivist cultures in Asian or less developed countries tend to place high

value on community cohesion, and will attempt to achieve unanimity. As one effect of this theme of cohesion, Hofstede (1984) writes 'In order to preserve harmony, the truth may have to be strained a bit' (p. 89). Sivaraksa (1992) supports this, writing that Westerners 'seem to feel somewhat guilty' about corruption, whereas people in at least some Asian countries 'appear to show no regret whatsoever' (p. 20)²⁵⁴.

In the Chandpur TCDC project, as described in sections 5.1.2 and 5.4, project managers described villagers as initially wanting traditional handouts. They had a survival mentality with vision limited to hopes for individuals or their own family, and did not seek education or coaching in microenterprise. It took external information and persuasion before they embraced capability improvement as a goal of the project. Even in 2017, my interviews showed one community in the project retaining a dependency mentality. Project managers characterised that particular community as having from the start a stronger ethos than others of dependency, with feelings of limited power to make change happen. Others, including Bangladeshi people, considered that attitude existed more widely than that one community or even just the Chandpur TCDC project. They described a national trait of deference to authorities, at times coming across to Westerners as being obsequious. Some informants explained that attitude was seen as important as it preserves the structures of society and retains stability. One term for this is *patronism*, where relationships, autonomy and obligations are governed by caste-like hierarchies. As in section 2.8, Maloney (1988) considered that in Bangladesh patronism was a national behavioural characteristic that was one of the main causes of the country's poverty. More widely, Boyle (1998) wrote of the hierarchical nature of many Asian cultures that have 'paternalistic authority ... loyalty to a group ... [and] deference toward paternal authority ... Thus, power and authority flow downward' (p. 98). However in reality the interviewed villagers seemed to be far from fatalistic about their opportunities. They used occasionally the phrase 'insh-allah' – if God wills – and intended that as an acknowledgement that they did not have full control over their lives, but, within current constraints, most of them would make plans and take action.

It would be useful to explore the ways in which communal decision-making styles can still fit with new initiatives.

A more philosophical question is about the origins of the worldviews that lead to those differing attitudes. From both fieldwork and literature, Christian FBOs, seeing all of life as infused with religious beliefs, find this topic of *agency* is informed by humanity being made in the image of God. According to this view, all people have high capabilities and equal value and rights. Further, it is considered that those who have fewer opportunities are the subject of God's special care and should

²⁵⁴ In one Asian country where I worked I experienced frequently this priority of harmony over truth from my local colleagues, and as a Westerner I found this characteristic confusing and frustrating.

be empowered to lift themselves. These understandings challenge any karmic assumptions, as explained in section 7.3, that a person's status is fixed for life, and they also tend to provide a more deliberate and optimistic view of enhancing human capability than many villagers will have. So to Christian FBOs, even the topic of *agency* rests on religious assumptions, and is a derived or secondary issue that could be considered as a subtopic under religion. For Western secular organisations the philosophical basis will be different from FBOs' and in this research was unclear. However the practical outcome is similar and, for some decades, empowerment has been seen across the development industry as a primary goal for development, as a *raison d'être*.

While in the paragraph above I suggested that *agency* could be a subtopic under religion, I have identified it here and elsewhere as a separate theme. One purpose was to test the idea of the three-party typology. On this subject of *agency*, in practice Western faith-based and secular organisations align well with each other, and the recipients appear as distinct, creating a two-party polarity of recipients and Westerners. However a qualification to the two-pole typology is that the three-party model in this thesis explains better the philosophical underpinnings of the two categories in a patronistic view: assumptions around the presence or form of an 'excluded middle' (section 2.4) could materially affect how different parties understand these power relationships. Box 10 provides an example of a clash of values over the topic of autonomy, this example showing a clash across sectors within a country.

Box 10: A clash of styles

As a review consultant on one development project, I soon became aware of disagreements between the recipient rural communities and their government bureaucracy. Representatives of government were adamant that they could provide quickly a quality infrastructural project, and that consultation processes were a waste of time. However the recipients had different views on the outcomes they wanted, these being more comprehensive than physical infrastructure, including autonomy in later use of the facilities. In addition, to fit elements of their own religious worldviews, methods of implementation were important to the rural communities. These communities were feisty, and these opposing views led to a hiatus in processing the project approval. Finally, with the support of our review team, decision-making structures were altered to give a degree of delegation to local communities that was unusual in that culture.

A further consideration is the extent to which attitudes to agency are fixed over time. Speaking generally, Hiebert (2008) (section 2.1) considers people's worldviews are 'dynamic growing entities', and other writers quoted in chapter 2 described evolutions in worldviews among Westerners. While practitioners might find that cultures are deeply embedded and take many years to change (Silzer, personal communication, 2019), Douglas (1992) states: 'All historical cultures are in transition. Cultural stability is short-lived' (p. 25). Looking specifically at agency, offshore fieldwork for this thesis (section 5.1.2) showed a change in attitudes within the TCDC villages, and commentators claimed changes were occurring nationally across Bangladesh as education increased. This matches

the claims of Boyle (1998), who writes of some Asian countries that 'an educated, informed, and mobilized public' (p104) will behave differently from those lacking education or exposure to Western values. It also matches the views of Bista (1991) who claims that there has been an ebb and flow over centuries in the detailed local forms of patronism; and of Uberti (2015) who describes patronism as a passing phase in development. These writers could be described as promoting and predicting greater agency as societies develop, and Sivaraksa (1992) supports that but with a strong proviso that agency should not become autonomy and individuality. He argues that communal life and connectedness are essential to a healthy society that highlights spiritual values, and in that he is supported by biblical visions of the kingdom of God (section 2.2).

So in the topic of agency this thesis has exposed a further area where there is potential for a significant disconnect between the parties in development. This disconnect is partly two-polar, in that outwardly the West, both secular and religious, has a similar approach, with recipients on the other pole. That two-party view demonstrates a limitation in the thesis's main three-party typology. But the disconnect still fits the thesis's main triangular typology in that the philosophical bases for the views of the parties are informed by their religious assumptions and open the possibility of rapport being explored across the religious boundaries.

8.2.3 Reflections on accord and dissonance

The material above indicates that connections between the three partners in development can be anywhere along a continuum. This continuum goes from, at one end, fear and suspicion, with opposition or silence, to, at the other end, openness and trust as partners working at the same table with shared understandings of goals and methods. Both the fieldwork for this research and the literature indicate that religion, in its sense as a system of beliefs, including belief in some sort of god, provides a foundation for people's understanding of life. This is almost universal among recipients, and is crucial to their self-understanding. Moreover shared religion is crucial to recipients' trust in their development partners, regardless of their faith identities, opening doors of communication that secularity shuts. We could think of the assembled story as a symphony with many variations to a main theme, each of significance or even dominating in its own time, but without overriding the core theme: that religion, regardless of its specific label, is a facilitator of hearts-and-minds connections.

Looking at the three partners in development, Western secular organisations do not appreciate the depth and breadth of religious influence on the ethos of recipients or FBOs. They tend to put religion on a shelf, to be addressed between local organisations only and, if it arises in discussion, to be addressed at a political level rather than by delving into meanings. As explained above, Government and multi-lateral development organisations, regardless of personal beliefs of their staff, tend to be

suspicious of religious institutions, and avoid anything religious in their planning and execution. When dealing with recipients their attitude can appear to be tolerant, while in their dealings with FBOs some secular funders appear to be anti-religious, tending towards paranoia, refusing to discuss religion despite FBO invitations. *Paranoia* is my word, it was my impression from my fieldwork, and it was not used by any interviewee. I sought advice from one FBO practitioner who considered initially that while the word *paranoia* fitted some organisations it is too strong a word as a generalisation. He preferred to say that those who will talk about religion ‘keep it at arm’s length’, willing to discuss it as long as it does not affect anything. That fits my understanding of the word *paranoia*²⁵⁵, and my informant agreed on reflection that the way I have used it here is appropriate. Meanwhile FBOs have allowed themselves to become instruments for funders’ secular agendas, without substantive discussions of visions and goals, having a somewhat strained working relationship. Anecdotal evidence suggests that recipient partners in the field remain silent about their real aspirations in the hope of getting at least part of what they want. This causes frustrations, with FBOs and recipients feeling the development programmes are narrow and lack sustainability, while secular organisations are unlikely to be aware of the profound gap in team understandings. This level of dysfunction is a concern as those three partners are dominant players in the global development industry.

This clear-cut picture is modified by a number of factors. One is that there is much common ground between the parties, including wishes for improved health and child development; values of tolerance; and a spirit of goodwill. As one recipient expressed it: ‘there is more that unites us than divides us’, although it was unclear whether that person was referring to differences between religions, or across the religion/secularity interface.

Other modifiers of a black-and-white picture include the place of professionalism in establishing relationships. Using modern best practice, secular organisations can collaborate and connect with both recipients and FBOs, although they can expect to find it difficult to move beyond superficial connections. They need to show, over time and in practice, that they care about the welfare of recipients, although it is likely their relationships will always remain somewhat guarded. As a corollary FBOs, while having, through religion, a special link with the majority of recipients worldwide, cannot rely on that alone but need to use modern best practice in establishing and maintaining relationships. This will include: taking time to establish trust, doing baseline surveys, and using suitable techniques for grassroots-level engagement in both planning and implementation. Further, fieldwork indicated the value of not just empathising, but discussing and debating differences in worldviews, as one step in establishing trusting relationships.

²⁵⁵ Paranoia is defined in dictionaries as ‘unfounded ... fear and suspicion’ (Collins dictionary, 2009, p. 1199), or ‘an abnormal tendency to suspect and mistrust others’ (Oxford dictionary, 2005a, p. 822)

Further modifiers include: a complicating role of extremists who can sometimes be anti-foreign; genuine differences between religions; and concerns about proselytising by FBOs. These modifying factors are acknowledged as real, but none of them invalidates the summary above. To continue the musical image, all these modifiers alter the harmony but where that main theme – connection via religion – is lacking, relationships are likely to be more muted or discordant.

Perceptions of people in different corners of the triangle of relationships could be summarised as in Figure 14 and Figure 15. Negative perceptions include that other parties have no values; or their beliefs inhibit development; or they have a proselytising agenda; or they are bound by fears, prejudice and ignorance.

Positive perceptions include that other parties provide resources, or share values and understand each other, or carry out the wishes of another party, and make useful changes.

One factor that contributes to relationship gaps could be fear of the unknown and, possibly by extension, denial, and that topic needs to be addressed further. It is also accepted that some relationship factors distort the picture. These can include political hierarchies, and worldviews that, in some cultures, limit the perception of agency of some groups. The latter point fits better with a two-party typology – Western and recipient – than the three-party triangle that is common in this thesis.

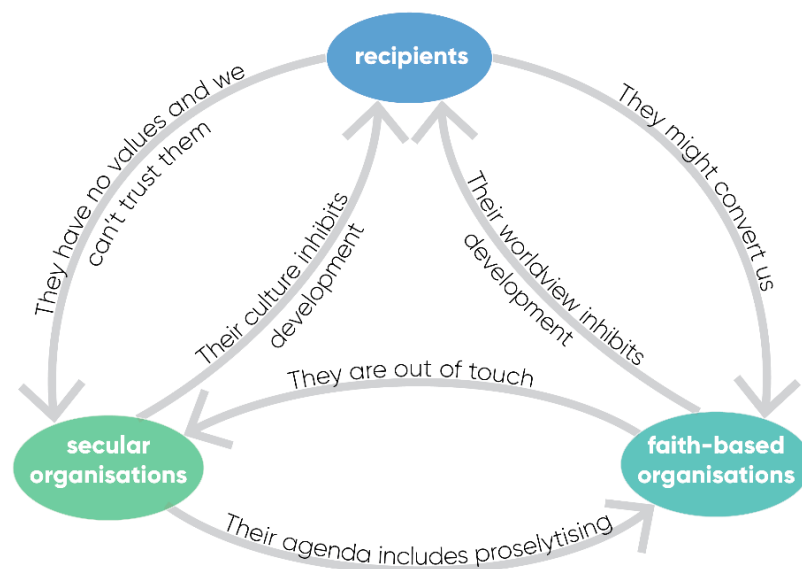


Figure 14: Negative perceptions about connections

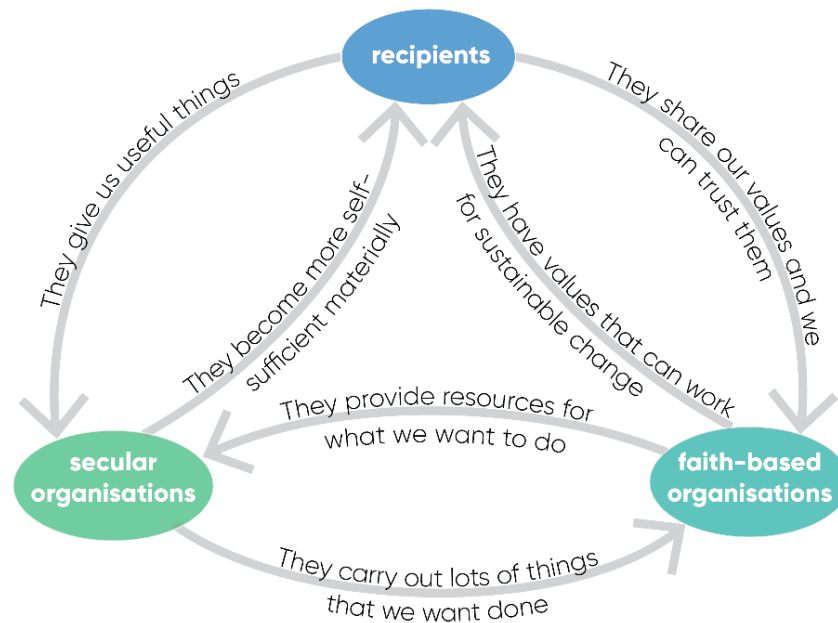


Figure 15: Positive perceptions about connections

Finally, despite the sometimes uneasy relationships between secular and faith-based organisations, I suggest their common heritage in the Enlightenment and modernity could form the basis for a closer relationship. Extending this, the field data and literature could be taken to support seeking suitably skilled FBO or religious people to act as facilitators of engagement and collaboration across the triangle of relationships. As in section 2.7 religious communities are uniquely equipped for ‘bridging the divides of race, class and nationality’ or, in the terms of this thesis, achieving a connection in spirit. This interaction would not happen easily: all three parties would need to make significant adjustments to their ways of working, specific to each development project; and FBOs would see themselves as partners, not just neutral facilitators. This is addressed more in section 8.3.

Figure 6 indicated three overlapping circles, and much of the discussion in this thesis has been framed around that figure. It is clear that the circles overlap, and the separations in Figure 14 and Figure 15 are for convenience of illustrating key aspects of relationships rather than indicating clear space between the categories. In Figure 6 the amount of overlap shown between FBOs and recipients, and between FBOs and secular organisations is greater than that between recipients and secular organisations: that is one finding of this research. Figure 6 also shows some common ground between all the parties, reflecting at least a common humanity that all parties share. One could argue that the overlaps between all the parties should be greater than what is shown. However the data only allow us to indicate overlaps in a relative and qualitative sense, and details of the figure should not be stretched beyond that.

Regarding public participation in planning projects, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (2014) describes partnership in development projects as collaborating ‘in each aspect of the decision[s] including the development of alternatives and the identification of the

preferred solution’; as where the partners look to each other ‘for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate [that] advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible’²⁵⁶. This thesis has treated the words *partners* and *parties* as almost interchangeable. We can raise a question over the extent to which partnership, in the sense of the IAP2 description, is possible, given the imbalance in power between donor and recipient. As noted since chapter 1 a major goal of development theoreticians and organisations since the 1980s has been to collaborate, and terms like participative development have become a mantra among development agencies. This research has shown that partnership is possible but is rarely achieved to the extent envisaged by IAP2. As discussed earlier in chapter 8, according to Boyle (1998) Western practices of participation also come from Western worldviews and Western understandings of human rights, including patron-client theories²⁵⁷.

8.3 Post-secularism

Of various potential theories, post-secularism emerged as highly relevant for addressing my research question, and the material above enables an examination of how post-secular theory might apply in international development.

As described in section 2.6, the term *post-secular* was popularised by Jürgen Habermas (2008). His concept was that there had been a resurgence of religion in public life, so ‘religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularist certainty that religion will disappear worldwide ... is losing ground’ (p. 21). A consequence is that ‘the normal [secularised] model for the future of all other cultures suddenly becomes a special-case scenario’ (Habermas, 2006, p. 2). In the evolution of development theory Lunn (2009, pp. 939-940) considered ‘avoidance of religion’ was a passing phase but religion’s resurgence has been a surprise to the West. The depth, extent and limitations of that resurgence are addressed in this section.

Looking firstly at my fieldwork my interviews indicated that, between secular and faith-based organisations, there is no dialogue over religious issues; and between secular organisations and recipients, dialogue is minimal. My FBO interviewees said (see section 6.1) they operate under donor policies that limit development assistance to what are seen as non-religious activities, and they work only as instruments to carry out the development agendas of secular donors, having no substantive

²⁵⁶ IAP2 (2014) claims this description ‘is quickly becoming an international standard’.

²⁵⁷ In a recent submission to the New Zealand government, Goodman (2019), for VSA, describes VSA’s role in partnership terms including: ‘Volunteers are not seen as consultants or simply as technical advisers, rather as skilled partners ... [it] work[s] alongside a recipient partner and share[s] knowledge and effort. This approach ensures skills transfer to individuals ... [It recognises] the local context our partners bring to the table is as valuable as the skills and knowledge our volunteers bring ... by working together we learn from each other’ (pp. 3-9). VSA aims for its volunteers to be ‘insiders’ as far as practical, living in the recipient communities, and VSA claims this is best development practice.

discussions over what they see as holistic development. Secular donors and practitioners largely endorsed those FBO views, agreeing implicitly and explicitly that there is no room for FBOs' distinctive faith-based views. Turning to recipients, secular donors and practitioners claimed to be open to discussing and fitting in with their religious views, without necessarily supporting them, but in practice those conversations occur infrequently and superficially. These field discussions were with New Zealand-based organisations or mainly in a New Zealand-funded project. But the reach of experience of some of the organisations interviewed was global and, with one exception, the responses fit well with international academic and project reporting perspectives. The exception from global experience is that, as in section 2.3, the approach from New Zealand's MFAT seems more cautious about embracing post-secularity than some jurisdictions. But countering that comment of New Zealand being an outlier, some of the apparently more flexible global organisations admit their practices do not always live up to their policies (section 2.7)²⁵⁸.

To add to the complexities, in addition to internal debates over the role of religion in shaping their own goals, FBOs themselves often appeared to be compromised in the public arena as most raise religious issues only when they can be expressed in terms such as values. They do not decry those values, and often, for example regarding human rights, environmental and gender issues, their values align fully with those of many secular donors. But conferring over those values is not, in the Habermasian sense, a post-secular discussion.

Strictly speaking, Habermas's concept of post-secularity applies only within those countries, primarily Western, that had once been secularised. However in international development we have a triangle of relationships, that is recipients, FBOs and secular organisations, seeking to work together across worldview boundaries. A spirit of post-secularism would extend from inside Western countries and imply these three partners would interact freely about their worldviews, with the secular partner accepting the religious views of the others as making legitimate contributions to the preparation and execution of development plans. That would provide what Habermas (2008) supported as 'the polyphonic complexity of the diverse public voices', and put pressure on secularists to '[meet] their religious fellow citizens as equals'. (p. 29)

As Ager and Ager (2016) (section 2.6) noted, that call for equality is difficult for secularists to fulfil. Even Habermas was, I consider, conflicted, in that he regarded secularity as the default standard for evaluation of ideas; and others (sections 2.6) endorsed that view of Habermas. Habermas supported that position by equating secular arguments with rationality, reason, logic and science: so by implication, religious arguments do not fit those descriptors. However some of my FBO interviewees expressed their support for modern science, describing, for example, how their approaches to health

²⁵⁸ Borchgrevink and Erdal (2017, p. 25) also report substantive roles for religion when donors and recipients are all within the same faith community: in their case regarding charity within Islamic circles.

and environmental issues were in tune with scientific understandings. They see their religious assumptions as not in competition with rationality and science, but further informing them. So Habermas's view above seems a provocative and uninformed stance²⁵⁹. More fundamentally, and also contrary to Habermas's position, some FBO personnel and academic writers consider (sections 2.6, 2.7, 3.2 and 7.3) secularism is another faith, and a minority faith, that rests on its own debatable assumptions²⁶⁰. As in section 3.2, according to some writers, secularism is not 'a neutral position ... but ... a rival religious claim' (McLoughlin, 2011, pp. 11, 61, and similarly UNFPA, 2014, p. 4); and in seeing secularism as an ideology that people are 'proselytising ... onto someone else' (section 7.3), at least some FBO interviewees held a similar opinion. So Habermas and his associates, while affirming a need for religious input in this post-secular world, seem to keep religious views at arms-length, retreating from the challenges of authentic engagement. As in section 2.3, post-secularism to them (Habermas, 2008) was about the 'inclusion of minorities in civil society' (p. 24), and not about 'appreciation of an alien culture' (p. 23). So they seem trapped in their own description of '[struggling to] meet their religious fellow citizens as equals' (Habermas, 2008, p. 29), and of limiting dialogue to 'a *narrow secularist* notion of a pluralist society' (Habermas, 2006, p. 3). As noted in section 2.7, Wilson considers (2017, pp. 1076, 1083, 1090) there is an 'ontological injustice' here, in that those who are in a position of power by holding the purse strings, exclude the 'views of alternative worlds'. According to most writers, who, regarding post-secularity, use words like tentative, ad hoc, and uneasy, secularity is so embedded in Western thinking that these difficulties are typical of Western attempts – where it is of a mind to try – to become truly post-secular.

Habermas (2008, pp. 18-19) is influenced by another assumption. As in section 2.6 he sees the worldwide religious resurgence as typified in conservative and fundamentalist groups, which are likely to be combative and confrontational. That view might or might not be true as a general global statement. However in international development, the fieldwork for this research in the Chandpur TCDC project, from both recipients and project managers, indicated (section 6.5) the effect of engaging over religion has been enhanced appreciation of other people and their views. Outside the Chandpur TCDC other research interviews, both with Bangladesh commentators and FBOs with a global reach, reinforced strongly the expectation of accord as the normal outcome of cross-party dialogue about religion. That also matches well with the weight of field evidence (section 6.5) which demonstrates peace making and team building as outcomes of engaging over religious assumptions,

²⁵⁹ Musgrave (2009, pp. 50f) in a chapter titled *Is science a rational enterprise?* examines claims of science to rationality, and considers its 'dogmas' have an element of religious 'indoctrination'. Similarly Sivaraksa (1992) states that 'value systems and ethics are not peripheral to science and technology. In fact, they constitute the basic assumptions and the driving force of science'.

²⁶⁰ In a recent book Fountain and Petersen (2018, p. 404) argue that 'all NGOs are, to a degree, faith-based insofar as they are value-driven, ideological and normative actors promoting a certain "faith" over others – whether that faith is human rights, development, humanitarianism, secularism or Islam'. That argument could be extended from NGOs to governmental and multinational organisations.

effectively advocating a post-secular approach. Habermas's assumption of combative religion would unnecessarily inhibit communication with religious groups.

Within the development sector, over the last 20 years of addressing this topic, there is minimal written push-back against post-secularism from either theorists or practitioners. If counter-arguments do exist they have been articulated more by academic silence and practical inaction, than by active expression. We could speculate on the reasons for the silence. Fieldwork for this research suggests secularists lack a critical review of their own philosophies: they do not know of the idea of post-secularism, or are uncomfortable with it, or they have no alternative position to put forward.

Some attempts stand out for including religion in the public discourse. Section 2.6 recorded a 2010 revised statement from New Zealand's HRC (2010, p. 145), that religious groups 'have the right to publicly influence the political process and societal norms'. Among other examples of compelling stories (see section 2.7) Duff et al. (2016) wrote about productive engagements between religious and government or multilateral agencies, including DFID, UN and World Bank. However, as discussed in sections 2.7 and 5.2 the collaborative ethos of leaders in DFID, UN and World Bank has neither fully penetrated their organisations, nor been carried through to consistent ground-level practice. So far they appear to be limited largely to high level forays into policy statements. As sections 3.2, 5.2 and 6.1 show, New Zealand's HRC position has not been carried through to MFAT's policies and practices. It could be argued that is a violation of human rights both within New Zealand, in that one sector is denied any meaningful input to policy and practice; and externally, in that a ubiquitous but quiet voice is side-lined in discussions.

So my fieldwork and the weight of literature show that in international development the examples of post-secular engagement, in the Habermasian sense, could be just candles in the dark, rather than a new day dawning. In both New Zealand and global experience, post-secularity makes only sporadic contributions, and does not shape development dialogues in any consistent or systemic way. A view from some writers (e.g. Deneulin and Rakodi (2011, p. 50), and Sidibe (2016, p. 1)) is that secular-religious relationships are still evolving. However my fieldwork suggests that, at least in the experience of the New Zealand industry, secular organisations are unable to engage in dialogue on post-secularity, with ignorance or fear possibly inhibiting exchange of ideas. Their responses suggest a lack of examination of foundation assumptions, and a lack of awareness, or at least a lack of acknowledgement, that there is an issue to address. That in turn suggests the spirit of post-secularity has not penetrated far into the ethos of, not just development organisations, but the Western community at large. This research demonstrates the negative effects of that on relationships in international development.

Conversely, for the arm of the triangle that connects recipients and FBOs, while initial contacts are sometimes cautious, there are fewer inhibitions over religious discussions. Rather such discussions are eventually welcomed by both parties. The concept of post-secularity is not fully relevant there, as both parties have always been religious and have already an 'intuitive understanding of and attention to spiritual as well as material needs' (Lynch & Schwarz, 2016). However anecdotal evidence (see opening paragraphs of chapter 1) suggests that recipient assumptions of practitioner secularity can be an inhibitor. Just as relevant or even more so might be theories of cognitive and cultural consonance. Wilson (2017, p. 1090) for example writes of how 'religious actors are "fluent" in both secular and religious vernacular, with their underlying worldview assumptions making them able to communicate with wide varieties of audiences'.

In practice a post-secular equal-partner approach to development planning would raise challenging issues for all parties. As noted earlier, in section 8.2.2, current Western manifestations of empowerment, especially what is called *localisation*, could lead to violations of what some donors and practitioners see as basic human rights, in that local practices might conflict with international preferences. Further, secular donors or FBOs might struggle to assist enhancement of some local religious practices. The principle of post-secularism would ask for dialogue and debate, rather than silence or acquiescence by any of the partners, to seek constructive solutions that all could live with fairly comfortably.

I have suggested that FBOs could be in a position to act as facilitators of a dialogue between recipients and secular organisations. For that dialogue to be effective would require secular organisations to accept their difficulties in empathising and communicating with the religious ethos of their partners, the value of addressing that barrier, and that religious aspirations could be woven into the fabric of a development programme. Governments and multilateral organisations would need to risk electorate backlashes against dabbling in religion, and also accept that better engagement will lead to more effective outcomes, even if processes seem less efficient in the short term. Recipients would need to be aware that their partners might be secular, and would need to develop relationships where they could trust external organisations enough to explain their views to them. Finally FBOs, who are dissatisfied with acting as mere facilitators, might expect a substantive input as part of a three-way partnership. In many cases that sort of multi-party collegiality seems some distance away as it requires a radical change in processes of planning development programmes. In addition, if they were to take the role described, FBOs would need to develop high-quality skills at consultation and negotiation.

As noted in section 2.6 Harrington (2007) argued that Habermas might be 'opening himself to [religious matters] only in such a guarded, conditional way that it is not really opening them at all' (p. 546). Harrington partly excused Habermas's caution by referring to the 'limits of translation' (p.

551), where secular and religious people have difficulty communicating, and Habermas himself was likely influenced by his view of religious resurgence being often among extremists. Harrington saw understanding as a difficulty even within the restricted range of European, post-Enlightenment culture, where 'religious language' marginalises discussion. So I suggest that if Habermas, with his awareness of the need for engagement between the secular and religious, had this difficulty, we should have limited expectations over the depth of engagement in international development between secular and religious people who are not expert in this field. We could expect it might take some time for trusting relationships to mature, and for new ways of working to become embedded in practice and, further, each project would have its unique features requiring tailoring of unique processes. The nub of the findings of this thesis is that the rewards in terms of close connections are likely to be high: the reward, if done well, of helping all parties to 'cross the bridge' instead of shouting over the river²⁶¹. As Raines and Ewing (2006) assert 'There's always a bridge' (p. 66-67).

In addition, in my explanation of post-secularism in chapter 2, I mentioned suggestions of Habermas for ways forward: essentially he advocated empathy, seeing the world from inside someone else's world. That is a weak response. Fieldwork for this research confirms the views of many writers that in practice, if Western development organisations are to connect well with the less developed world and to have productive relationships with it, donors and practitioners need to go beyond that sort of post-secularity and seek to become part of other people's worlds. Many academics have made this point particularly for ethnographic studies (section 4.4). Narayan, Chambers et al. (2000, pp. 288-289) and others (see section 2.7) indicate donors and practitioners need to identify common ground, hear differences and achieve religious literacy. This research agrees with these writers but adds that they would benefit from debating and challenging differences, making a proactive head-and-heart quest to seek resolution, and investigating the effects on project development implementation. In Figure 8 this could be seen as moving from level 2 to level 3.

Lofland et al. (2006) wrote 'Much, and perhaps most, qualitative fieldwork findings of some theoretical conceptual significance are not so much novel discoveries as they are "extensions" or "refinements" of existing work' (p. 195). I consider that quote applies to the theoretical findings of this research. That is not to diminish the significance of the findings but to help place them in the global mix of understanding and to use that mix as support and modification in applications to the task of international development.

²⁶¹ The expression, 'cross the bridge', picks up on a metaphor of one FBO representative (section 6.5), and a few writers (section 3.3).

8.4 Other theories

In my fieldwork, from FBOs and secular organisations, themes of participation, sustainability, empowerment, capacity building and self-determination were prominent, fitting the evolution of development theory, as presented in chapter 1²⁶². The outline there has provided a useful background for this research, and those topics appear frequently in this thesis. Most development experts over the last two or more decades have not challenged those messages, and I have assumed they are still seen as industry best practice. Where this research has impinged on those ideas it has been about extending them in practice to include seeking common ground on worldviews, and especially religious aspects of those. That has led to my suggesting, in the last step of Figure 1, in chapter 1, *spirituality* as the dominant theme for the current decade.

As relevant theories section 3.3 introduced *cognitive and cultural dissonance*, and section 2.4 introduced the related idea of an *excluded middle*. Alongside these, Chapters 1 to 3 addressed how participatory approaches are considered relevant and important for achieving accord. These approaches include techniques, particularly those popularised by Chambers (e.g. 1994a and 1994b²⁶³), that are designed to empower people and ensure they express their wishes rather than acquiesce to a top-down outsiders' agenda. All those are accepted today as valuable contributions to empowerment. However, they do not ensure connection as my fieldwork showed that, without a heart engagement, recipients are likely to contribute only superficially, and claims of participation can become little more than 'a lot of politically correct hypocrisy' (Lundgren et al., 2011, p. 58). But where recipients and practitioners have established trusting relationships, participatory techniques will aid empowerment through informed grassroots planning. While those techniques are important, for this thesis theories about cultural consonance and dissonance are more relevant. As in section 6.5 discussions between religious fraternities about community values in the Chandpur TCDC helped establish hearts-and-minds connections and set a platform where participatory techniques would be more productive. I note in passing that most literature accessed for this research on *cross-cultural dissonance* was about education, and was in situations of disparities over migrants or age. That could be expanded to address on-field consonance or dissonance in international development. Figure 16 depicts three levels of dissonance and connection that were encountered in this research fieldwork, using the theme of crossing bridges.

²⁶² These themes were less prominent in my interviews with recipients, who, according to managers of the Chandpur TCDC project, had had to be persuaded that the project goal was capacity building rather than material handouts.

²⁶³ 1994a, pp. 953f, and 1994b, pp. 1253f

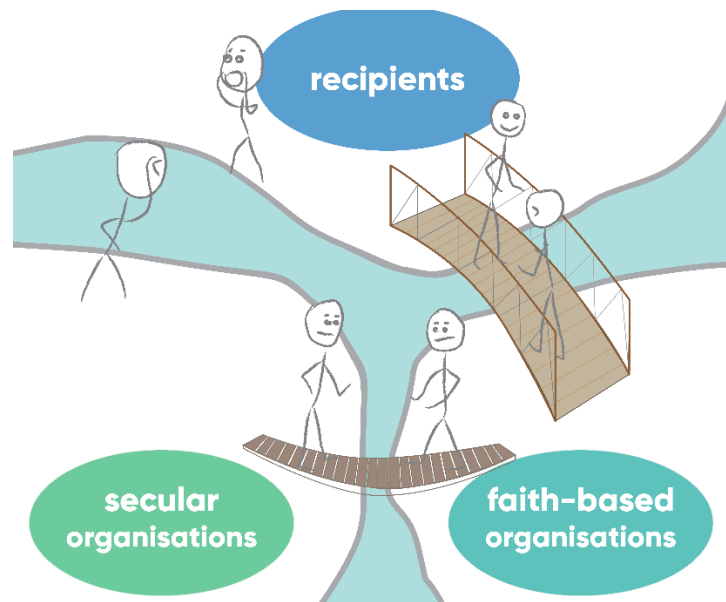


Figure 16: Community connecting bridges

8.5 Validity

Section 4.5 of this thesis addressed the validity and limitations of this research including its methods, analysis, and conclusions. An audit trail, primarily through triangulation, but also using methods of ‘member checking’; collaboration and peer review; awareness of my own position and potential biases; comparing with observations and interpretations of others; and what Creswell and Miller (2000) call ‘thick descriptions’, concluded that the research process was robust.

Looking in particular at interviews with recipients, and in response to concerns about the potential for villagers to be telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, I had two main reassurances. Firstly a serendipitous question – on reactions to the prospect of a non-religious development worker – that later proved to be central to the thesis, brought strong, spontaneous reactions that seemed to come direct from the heart, with no politicised suppression. Secondly many of my key questions brought vigorous debates between the official interviewees and bystanders, which were recorded and translated, removing any serious concern that I was only obtaining a sanitised answer. Further reassurance of the validity of this key material has come from presentations I have made at conferences and seminars: people from Asia and Africa have expressed spontaneously their heartfelt agreement with my opening stories in chapter 1.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

This chapter restates the main focus of the research, describes the key findings, including on the principal theoretical frame, and lists points where the research could be extended.

9.1 Focus

About 15 years ago German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas popularised a theory that we live now in a post-secular world. By this he meant that ‘religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularist certainty that religion will disappear worldwide ... is losing ground’ (2008, p. 21). One important part of this assertion was that, for the foreseeable future, religion was here to stay, but more significantly it would re-enter public affairs. A constraint on his thinking was that his claim applied to those parts of the Western world – Western Europe, Britain, and Britain’s white colonies, but not the USA – where secularism and a process of secularisation had become embedded in public thinking.

This thesis looks at the applicability of Habermas’s theory in international development. In doing so it addresses the theory both within Habermas’s context of those Western nations, and extending from there to where Western nations interact in development activities with the less developed and never-secular world.

While I accessed global literature on the topic, the fieldwork was circumscribed by the practical limitations of a PhD research project. Within less-developed communities, fieldwork looked at one project in Bangladesh. The project community had been partner to a comprehensive development programme that started in 2008, finished its main phase in 2014, and was still in active implementation although at lower intensity at the time of my field visit in 2017. Outside that community my fieldwork consisted of interviews with donors and practitioners. But looking wider again, a number of these practitioners – both the individuals I interviewed and their organisations – had a global reach and they brought that broader perspective to the interviews.

The focus of the study was on connections between the partners in development projects. I concentrated, not on formal business arrangements, but on what I have called *connecting in spirit*, or *hearts-and-minds* connections. This was about personal relationships, trust and confidence between people, and about communities’ and organisations’ willingness to expose and debate their inner beliefs and aspirations with their partners.

Two further points of emphasis need to be kept in mind. Firstly the spotlight was on connections, and not the effects of those connections, although effects surfaced at times in the research. One consequence of this focus was that the research did not address claims to the validity or truth of a particular worldview. Effectively the thesis accepts, as in Hiebert (2008), that we unconsciously develop our worldviews, so ‘they are generally unexamined and largely implicit’ (pp. 46-47). A second focus was a look at selected aspects of people’s worldviews, as keys to in-depth relationships. This latter point was to help understand the ease or limitations that the development partners might experience in their relationships, and for that purpose I examined mainly one aspect of people’s worldviews, rather than attempting a comprehensive exposition of the topic.

9.2 Findings

To represent the main parties in international development I generated a three-party typology in a triangular relationship: recipients, secular development organisations, and faith-based organisations (FBOs). I offer that typology for consideration by the development enterprise. Religious identities and assumptions were important to all three parties, and there was both enough commonality within each group and enough divergence between them to tell a helpful story. Literature and fieldwork demonstrated that these three parties ‘live in radically different conceptual worlds’²⁶⁴. Those three parties could also be considered to dominate the development sector – recipients, clearly; secular organisations as the main funders globally; and FBOs as probably the principal frontline workers – so issues that are important to them influence global development efforts.

The research showed that connections between these three partners can range from, at one end, fear and suspicion, with opposition or silence; to, at the other end, openness and trust, with the partners working at the same table with shared understandings of goals and methods. The collaborative end of that spectrum could be assumed to be an ideal ambition. This research indicated that religion, as a system of beliefs, including in some sort of god or supernatural power, provides a foundation for many people’s understanding of life and shapes their behaviours, values and hopes. This is almost universal among recipients and is essential to their self-perception, and many hold their beliefs passionately. Moreover shared religion is crucial to their trust in their development partners, regardless of their specific faith identities, opening doors of communication that secularity shuts.

In contrast Western secular organisations generally either do not appreciate the depth and breadth of religious influence on the ethos of recipients or FBOs, or they avoid anything religious in their planning and execution. FBOs, to whom everything is infused with their religious understandings, have acquiesced in this, allowing themselves to become instruments for funders’ secular agendas,

²⁶⁴ Hiebert, 2008, pp. 14-15

being frustrated partners in programmes they see as narrow and lacking sustainability. Anecdotal evidence, such as in the opening paragraphs of chapter 1, suggests that recipients might keep silent on their true aspirations in the hope of obtaining at least part of what they want from development. Given the dominance of these three parties in global development, this level of dysfunction is a concern.

However that clear-cut picture is modified by a number of considerations. One is that there is much common ground between the parties, including wishes for improved health and child development, values of tolerance, and a spirit of goodwill. Another modifier is the effect of good professional practice in establishing relationships, such as using best-practice consultation techniques and taking time to establish relationships. Other modifiers include variations in recipients' responses to people of other religions, with mid-level political leaders appearing to be more suspicious about potential effects on their positions.

Further modifiers suggest that on some topics a two-party typology can be more applicable than the triangle of relationships that is prominent in this thesis. For example, considering theories of agency, there was a strong two-pole grouping. Westerners, both secular and faith-based, had an agenda of empowerment of recipients, of capacity building, and this clashed with expectations of many traditional societies which are accustomed to a culture of patronism and dependency. Another example is that a number of people asserted Christian FBOs have been the strongest secularising force in history, bringing their Western understandings of health, education and science, and making redundant some assumptions about the influence of spirits. This brings FBOs closer to Western secular thinking but creates a separation between them and the views of most recipient groups.

However no modifiers invalidate the comment above: that religion facilitates hearts-and-minds connections between recipients and development agencies, and where that religious connection is lacking, relationships are likely to be more difficult and limited.

Returning to theoretical underpinnings, this research demonstrated limitations in Habermas's assertion that we live in a post-secular world. Firstly, within the West, secular organisations struggle to engage collaboratively with religion. Habermas was possibly influenced by his research clientele being from combative religious elements rather than the peace-making and constructive organisations that work in international development. Perhaps as a consequence, while advocating that religious voices should be equal partners in public discussions, he himself had difficulties in this, unnecessarily setting religion against reason, and giving priority to reason, in public decision-making. Some jurisdictions have made cautious attempts to adopt an even-handed spirit of post-secularity, but New Zealand practice, which was the main forum for my fieldwork, has made limited efforts. Secondly, while Habermas restricted his discussion of post-secularity to activities within formerly-

secular countries, it is also an important topic when looking at relationships across national boundaries. The spirit of post-secularism would imply explorations of underlying worldviews of all partners, identifying their aspirations and factors that would aid sustainability. This research indicated there is a clear bias against giving religion an equal voice, whether that religion comes from recipient partners or FBO practitioners. I did not discover any development projects where that open level of interaction had taken place, or donor organisational documents where it was firmly embedded, indicating that post-secularism is at best a work in progress. Claims of partnership between all the parties, which appear often in official donor documentation, have a hollow ring.

One suggestion that emerges from this research is that Western FBOs, given their connections to the other two partner categories – their grounding in modern science and rationality, and the trust extended to them by religious recipients – could have a valuable role in facilitating connections between all the partners: in the terms of this thesis, in achieving a connection in spirit. For this to be effective would require attention to a number of factors. The FBOs would need to operate according to best professional practice, as natural rapport is not enough in itself. Secondly it would imply in-depth engagement, especially in cross-party discussions in project set-up phases, identifying the heart priorities of the partners. This process would require robust discussion and debate, and this would happen only where trust had grown between all the partners. Related to this would be addressing potential modifications to the worldviews and aspirations of all partners, including the sometimes-contentious issue of proselytising – religious, secular or political – or the similar but less controversial term of *transformational development*. Perhaps finally the FBOs would generally want to be substantive participants in these three-way discussions, not just neutral facilitators or instruments of others' agendas.

It could be claimed that the conclusions are specific to this case study or to New Zealand, but I argue they apply more generally. The main method of validation was through triangulation, 'where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information' (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 126). So document research; interviews with recipient villagers; interviews with people outside villages who knew the village cultures; interviews with donors and practitioners who have worked globally; and global literature combined to provide a fairly robust picture, with consistent findings that reinforced each other, but including enough differences to ring true to life. In addition I was able to review my evolving findings with some of my interviewees; collaborate with and obtain peer reviews of parts of my work with experienced professionals; and discuss my emerging findings at conferences and seminars. The outcome was conclusions that seem authentic and credible: both the analyses of my fieldwork and extensions into globally applied opinions. I consider the findings of this research can be extended and applied over many institutions and social situations across many countries in more than one continent.

Within the scope of what was achievable in a PhD research project and on the specific points studied, the findings largely satisfied my research interest, while leaving many points still to be addressed. The findings confirmed, to a fair degree, some embryonic suspicions I had had before starting the research, although they added many shades of colour to them. The main areas of surprise were the level of passion expressed by recipients and frustration expressed by FBOs around development of religion-based relationships in development partnerships; and the warmth and apparent genuineness of rapport across religious identities. As discussed above an unexpected conclusion arising from those findings was a potential but challenging role for FBOs in facilitating improved connection between the parties.

9.3 Extensions

A PhD thesis could not address all the relevant or even important issues on its main theme. Some topics that might influence the findings of this thesis and that would benefit from further research are listed here.

1. The thesis noted some polls and other research that indicate a trend across the world to increasing levels of spirituality or religiosity. Some methods and outputs from those sources can be questioned, and that could affect an underlying assumption in the thesis regarding long term expectations of the prevalence and meaning of religion globally.
2. Some research participants and literature commented on effects of religious faith on development outcomes, generally asserting substantial benefits. This area needs more research before (a) the unique nature of religion-based development practice is clear, or (b) those benefits could be presented as being well supported, and/or limitations are identified to those claims of advantage.
3. Related to that research need, the thesis assumed that hearts-and-minds connections between the partners would lead to better development outcomes.²⁶⁵ A number of uncertainties in that assumption would benefit from examination. What level of rapport is necessary for results to largely satisfy all partners? What localised differences might occur? Or taking a different angle, what might arise to disrupt the organic connection that seemed to exist between religious faiths, for example regarding the varying emphases of different faiths or conversions to other faiths?
4. The research showed struggles in the practice of post-secularity both within Western countries where different organisations with different ethos engage over development; and

²⁶⁵ A popular African proverb seems apt: 'If you want to go fast, go alone: if you want to go far, go together' (Pinterest, n.d.).

around the triangle of relationships in development programmes. This research suggested prejudice, including from fear of the unknown, or ignorance of a disconnect, might be factors inhibiting adopting the spirit of post-secularity. What are reasons for lack of engagement over religion, and what are practical limitations to adopting a fuller practice of post-secularity? For example: What would be necessary, when preparing development policies, plans and programmes, to discover the views of all partners, and give equal weight to them? or Whose agenda carries most weight when debate fails to resolve conflicting priorities?

5. This thesis indicated religious beliefs and disbeliefs were key underlying assumptions in the values and expectations of the different partners in development. Religion could be argued to affect, for example, people's views on agency or empowerment. One specific area that was not explored in detail was the prevalence and effects of beliefs in a spirit world. The research also unearthed more of the FBOs' values than of other partners', claiming FBOs' understandings of holistic and sustainable development were infused with their religious assumptions. It would be helpful to have a fuller picture of the details of this infusion, and ways in which that connected them with or separated them from their partners.

In addition the research identified a number of topics where further information or research would be interesting, although not directly affecting the findings of this research. These include:

- the representativeness of religious views in inter-faith or cross-worldview dialogues, among the many religious voices that exist; and
- the evolving ethos and practices of FBOs including their connections with their religious parent bodies.

9.4 Finale

This research has shown that religion is often an important facilitator of connections between development organisations and recipients, and can be crucial to that; and conversely, an absence of religion is likely to create difficulties in those relationships. The research showed large gaps in thinking and considerable strength of feelings over this. Significantly, to religious people the particular religious identity is less important than having a religion, as religious worldviews are assumed to have substantial common foundations. In practice, while this connection can be immediate, its strength grows with time and with robust dialogue and debate.

The theory of post-secularity brings helpful understandings to the discussion. However this research showed the spirit of post-secularity is not practised well in international development, with the secular West engaging poorly with its religious partners. For relationships to approach their potential, concepts of post-secularism need to be extended from their original ideas of tolerance and

faith literacy, to include debates over differences. These debates might not just identify common ground but might also create it. It is here that Western faith-based organisations, which have roots in both Western secularity and the religious assumptions of most recipients, might have the trust and potential, with good professional practice, to play a key role in enabling all partners in international development to connect in spirit.

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